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RETHINKING CRITICALLY AND HOLISTICALLY:  
LITERARY SCHOLARSHIP ON MARY ANNE SADLIER AND  
THE FEMALE IRISH IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper focuses on the life of the Irish author Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903) who wrote under the pseudonym of J. Sadlier. Her novels are set against the backdrop of The Great Famine (1845-1849) and depict the lives of Irish female migrants of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this paper, we offer a critical and holistic academic review of Sadlier's life and literary scholarship on her works of fiction with regards to the experience of female Irish immigrants during the harsh and extremely challenging period in Irish history of the Great Famine also known as the Irish Potato Famine.

## Introduction

Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903) was the most important writer of the Great Famine generation, and the first Irish-American female voice. Writing under the moniker, J. Sadlier, Sadlier published more than sixty literary texts during her lifetime and with eighteen narratives which documented Irish history and the Irish American migration life. Her published narratives between the years of 1850 -1870 are the keys to understanding the Famine immigrants' lives and their beliefs, the traditional Catholic ideology (O'Keeffe 223).

## Sadlier's Early Life

Mary Anne Sadlier, an Irish-American writer, was born in 1820 as Mary Anne Madden. Her father, Mr. Francis Madden, was a merchant who encouraged his daughter to compose poetry and novels. At nineteen-years-old, Sadlier published her first literary texts in an English periodical, namely *La Belle Assemblée*. However, in 1843, Sadlier's father passed away, and this triggered her emigration, where she migrated with a younger brother, and other family members (Justin McCarthy 3017). Her first migration was to Canada, and she settled down there with a relative of her father, James Madden. Biographers only wrote a little about her mother, that Mary was named after her mother, and her mother died when she was a little child. According to her biographers, Sadlier's first year of migration is unknown; some assumed that she migrated in 1843, and others assumed in 1844. Sadly, the records before the famine migration were lost. Soon after, Sadlier and her brother moved to New York in September 1844. According to acknowledged records, she was twenty, and her brother was sixteen. Most notable, her father's family's first migration was in 1832, where James Sadlier, his three brothers, a sister along with their widowed mother, routed to America and settled in New York. In 1830, Sadlier's family learned the trade of publishing and established their own publishing House. Indeed, Sadlier's Publishing Company became the largest publisher in America. The success of Sadlier's business was based on the supply of holy bibles and school texts to America's Catholic population (O'Keeffe 247)

## Sadlier's Marriage and Literary Works

In 1846, Mary Anne Sadlier married James Sadlier, who was a junior partner of D. & J. Sadlier & Co., the Catholic publishing house. Her marriage was a significant move in devoting her life as a writer. Mr. Sadlier always offered his valuable assistance and inspiring encouragement to his wife. A prolific writer, Sadlier composed over sixty works between 1839 and 1900 and, as a bilingual person, she also translated many books from French. Mrs. Sadlier published historical novels, children's literature, and poetry and was the first Irish- American writer to write about the emigration and social subjects, including the Great Famine. In 1850, Sadlier entered a competition and won fifty-dollars with her book, *The Irish Orphan in America*. While living in Canada for fourteen years, Sadlier wrote historical novels, three of them on migration. She also spent nine years in America, particularly in New York, and wrote twenty-six texts, including fourteen novels. At the age of forty-nine, Sadlier's

husband died in New York and she became a widow with six children (O’Keeffe 16).

Sadlier’s works were the most valuable fiction in the 19th century and have been described as containing “observable truths”. According to Fanning, Sadlier’s narratives were literary reactions to historical circumstances in Ireland and America containing important and valuable narrative details with regards to the social and political contexts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Ryder, Sadlier’s migration narratives do not simply reflect the historical circumstances of the mass migration from Ireland pre and post Great Famine but also shape the whole formation of the emerging Irish-American immigrants life story at that time (Fanning, Kindle Edition). McCarthy, for instance, compliments Sadlier as being “one of the most gifted, industrious, and successful writers of the nineteenth century” (3017) due to the simple fact that writing for women in the 19th century was a difficult duty. As we now know, female writers often wrote using a pen name to secure their narratives just as Sadlier’s did, where she published all of her works under the pseudonyms D. & J. Sadlier and Mrs. J. Sadlier. According to Coleman, in the 19th century, around five hundred women were publishing in all genres, and female writers were writing and publishing anonymously (203).

In 1844, Sadlier started to hold regular social meetings at her home on Long Island, and in 1869, when her husband died, Sadlier turned to writing strictly on religious subjects. In 1880, Sadlier went back to Montreal, Canada and settled there with her married children. In later years, Sadlier worked with her daughter, Anna Theresa, who became a successful author of several books. In 1903, Sadlier died and was buried beside her husband in Montreal, Calvary Cemetery, Long Island (O’Keeffe 10).

Sadlier’s narratives reveal a central problem of the Great Famine immigrants, where their logical reactions to the risks of identity posed by the alien country was concomitant to their old ways and values. Sadlier implied the importance of morals in her novels; the Irish immigrant women can remain true to their Catholic teachings by keeping practising the values of the motherland.

Furthermore, Irish American literature of the of pre-famine era produced a literary habit of satire, with roots in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, that established the first noticeable shape of Irish response to American immigration. These early novelists demonstrate an impressive sympathy for language that takes the form of satiric exposure. The two most important authors of satire are Father Quipes and Paddy O’ Flarrity who ridiculed the immigrant’s dream of success (Fanning 44). However, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, another important theme appeared, which is the Great Famine, and the first author who experienced this story and documented the phenomenon was Sadlier.

Sadlier addresses many issues in her works of fiction, including discrimination, race relations and suffering in America, which have long been problematic. In the context of Irish female immigrants, fair-skinned immigrants were not considered white at that time. The definition of racism has changed over time and it was rooted in labour, class, and economics. Sadlier highlights

that Irish female immigrants were not generally accepted, and, as such, Irish Americans fought for politicians to recognise them as a part of the dominant race. During those precarious times, Irish female Catholic migrants before and after The Great Famine were struggling to survive in the white, Protestant world. It is undeniably a sympathetic story of how race has been a crucial characteristic in America (David 167). Sadly, the Irish had a hard time coming to America; even the Catholic Italians gave them a hard time. They were looked upon with suspicion by North Eastern American Protestants because of Catholic oppressions of the past; hence going West and South in America had different outcomes and viewpoints.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON MARY ANNE SADLIER**

In recent studies, in literary criticism female issues mostly have been the attention: for instance, the issue of Irish immigrants' lives and traditional Catholic Ideology (O'Keefe et al 2013, Fanning et al 2000, Peters et al 2009, national identity (Giammanco et al 2010, Van Os et al 2019) and the view of the sense of loneliness and vulnerability for abusing (Giammanco et al 2010). Some other studies have paid critical attention to fictional depictions of The Great Famine (King et al 2006. and Corporaal et al 2009). O'Keefe include the study of female identity in the context of Catholicism and patriarchal culture of Nineteenth-Century (O'Keeffe 2013) and the effective power of the Great Potato Famine to (re)freshen Irish female immigrants and give them a sense of pride of their roots, which results in construction determined Irish women who mostly occupied a precarious position. In our study, these Irish female fictional characters have been portrayed as strong, mature, and independent with unique standpoints in Irish and American societies. Relevant questions thus stand out: are these Irish female characters marginalised within their own community? Have the Irish female protagonists experienced the achievement of unique standpoints? Have they resist to overcome social oppression?

In this section, we present the literature review on Sadlier's novels. Sadlier wrote eighteen narratives, in which she documented Irish history and Irish American migration life. As discussed earlier, her published narratives between the years of 1850 to 1870 are the keys to understanding The Great Famine immigrants' lives and their beliefs, namely the traditional Catholic ideology. O'Keefe, for instance, asserts that Sadlier was instrumental in the formation of a transatlantic Irish Catholic identity (Fanning 33& O'Keefe 1). O'Keefe highlights Sadlier's advice to the Irish Catholic girls going to America and contends that *The Irish Girl in America* (1861) is a critique of Irish Catholic culture:

She seems to be advising Irish girls to stay at home through the observations of Bessy Conway: "my heart bleeds to tell it ... keep your girls at home", yet, on the other hand, she seems to be encouraging women to emigrate, provided they have support systems in place: "If they keep in a state of grace, and go regularly to their duty they're all right, and sure, thanks be to God! There's thousands of them that do" (*The Irish Girl in America* 294-297). Therefore,

from her successful portrayal of the emigrant character of Bessy, among others, embodying the “American Dream”, it would seem that Sadlier ultimately views emigration in positive terms for women (O’Keeffe, p. 228).

Therefore, from her successful portrayal of the emigrant character of Bessy, among others, embodying the “American Dream”, it would seem that Sadlier ultimately views emigration in positive terms for women (O’Keeffe 228). From a different perspective, Peters provides a biblical interpretation of Sadlier’s novels, focusing specifically on the figure of Lot’s wife. Peters commends Sadlier for her influence on the Irish community but states, “despite acknowledgment of her achievement for her ethnic community, her place in the history of biblical interpretation and transatlantic literary culture has been insufficiently explored” (Peter 186).

According to Sadlier’s daughter, Mary Foy, Sadlier was instrumental in forming her daughter’s personality; from her mother, “she inherited a love for the poetry and the ancient lore of that land [Ireland], so rich in inspiring memories” (331). King also views Sadlier’s role as “instrumental” in shaping a self-image for the Canadian Irish and American-Irish (King 46). He argues that, after the death of Thomas D’Arcy McGee (1825-1868), a Canadian poet, who was a major influence on her with regards to McGee’s “ground epic”, Peters insists that the shift to the theme of Catholicism in Sadlier’s novel is a response to anti-Catholicism movements, “anti-Catholic popular literature dominated the nineteenth-century American literary landscape, requiring a response from Catholic intellectuals” (Peters 187). Peters praises Sadlier for her Catholic influence on the Irish female immigrants’ community and her advice to Irish female immigrants not to spend their earnings on clothes, and to save their money as fictionalised in her narrative, *Bessy Conway; or, The Irish Girl in America* (1861). She also advises Irish female girls to “dress decently and plainly, in the way they think is becoming to their station” (*The Irish Girl in America* 33). She suggests also that Irish female immigrants were expected to support their fathers by giving their earnings to them.

According to Fanning, in his book, *The Irish Voice in America 250 Years of Irish-American Fiction* (2000), Sadlier’s fiction is typical of the “Famine generation fiction” (Fanning 36). He explains that Sadlier’s narratives of Irish-American immigrants written during the Great Famine can be categorised into three archetypal sorts of Irish immigrant fiction (Fanning 170). The first archetypal sort promotes Irish female immigrants to keep their Catholic faith; the second one teaches Irish female immigrants how to survive in America and the last one carries on a nationalistic theme. Interestingly, some of these novels contain traits of all three themes (Fanning 39). For Corporaal, Sadlier’s fictions have been successful in describing the Irish connection between the Great Famine and ethnic identity memories (Corporaal 143), where she identifies three patterns which form transcultural narrative patterns featuring immigrants who returned home physically or symbolically. She

focuses on the symbolic function of “coffin ships”, a term which refers to ships that transported Irish immigrant during The Great Famine:

It was not only the native Irish who were duped in the nineteenth century by poverty and hunger. Irish Protestants in the North, often descendants from early Scottish colonists, were experiencing the same inconveniences as the Catholic natives. They too had problems because of the bad crops and were experiencing poverty and famine. These problems which were therefore applicable to both Catholic and Protestant Irish - the unemployment rate, the oppressive rule of the British and the potato famine - caused various enormous emigration waves from all over Ireland in the nineteenth century (Corporaal 6).

Moreover, the migration realistic issue addressed within Sadlier’s works is the trans-Atlantic links between migration, religion and translation as reflected in Sadlier’s works and life, where mortality and religion were identified as the driving force behind Sadlier’s translations. Sadlier’s works also illustrate the growth of Catholic literature in English in the 19<sup>th</sup> century constructive period of both the Irish and the American Catholic Church (Milan 370).

Nevertheless, Giammanco maintains that the themes and issues which Sadlier chose to address in her works of fiction are the representation of Irish female protagonists as lonely and vulnerable to abuse (Giammanco13). For Van Os, Sadlier also portrays English female characters in her works and emphasises how the notion of national identity, in conjunction with Englishness and Irishness, can be linked to themes of religion, class and gender. Her depictions of female fictional characters reveal what it means to be Irish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in relation to the concepts of gender and colonialism in literature. Furthermore, Giammanco examines how gender, religion, ethnicity and class influence the female protagonists’ behavior and life. (Giammanco 13).

As argued similarly by Giammanco, Van Os also focuses on the representation of English female characters to illustrate how the notion of national identity, in conjunction with Englishness and Irishness, can be linked to themes of religion, class and gender. According to Van Os, Sadlier (these four authors; Mrs. Hoare, Edmund and Julia O’Ryan, May Anne Sadlier, and Alice Nolan) used traditional representations of Englishness to simulate the landlord classes, and re-constructed representations of Irishness to emphasise their critique of British colonial power (Van Os 10). Van Os not only analyses the representation of English female fictional characters generally in the literary works of the aforementioned authors in isolation but also reflects on what these depictions of female fictional characters reveal about what it means to be Irish. Van Os also discusses the construction of nations and national stereotypes in relation to literature, and explores different national representations of Ireland and England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century about the concepts of gender and colonialism in the literature (Van Os 37).

Indeed, scholars such as King and Corporaal have paid critical attention to fictional depictions of The Great Famine mostly dominated by Irish female images, and their works have placed great emphasis on Famine literature; for instance, the representation of female Irish starved bodies. They focus mainly on the inexpressible reality of the Great Famine's horrors. Even though the fictional character of the Irishwoman in 19<sup>th</sup> century literature of The Great Famine has been analysed, little critical attention has been paid to the literary portrayals of the protagonists of the Irish female immigrants in Irish literature of The Great Famine (Van Os 18).

In particular, O'Keeffe argues that Sadlier is the first author who established the main characteristics of Irish-American identity and, even if there is a prodigious presence of women in the flows of migration, the role of the Irish-American women in Sadlier's narratives in the 19<sup>th</sup> century recently has been largely neglected (O'Keeffe 303). O'Keeffe's studies explore cultural, religious identity, nationality and constructions of the gender of literary representations of Irish female immigrants' experiences, where she compares incidents from Sadlier's narratives to relevant documents of the era which discuss the importance of Catholicism and the Irish families' emigration and representations in America. Based on literary representations in Sadlier's emigrant narratives, O'Keeffe develops a further understanding of the experience of the 19<sup>th</sup> women emigrants who are often missing from notable works of literature and historical books. On the other hand, Corporaal, in "Memories of the Great Famine and Ethnic Identity in Novels by Victorian Irish Women Writers" (2009) introduces Sadlier's narratives as "authentic" Irish emigrants, where they act as "guidebooks" for emigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are authentic memories of The Great Famine in Ireland. Corporaal draws on other authors such as Elizabeth Hely Walshe (1835-1869), John McElgun (n. a.) and Emily Lawless (1845-1913) to underpin her claims and states that both Sadlier and Lawless "can be regarded as important chroniclers of their nation's history" (Corporaal 143). Corporaal also conducted a study on distinguishing three narrative templates in remigration in Irish and Irish Diaspora fiction between the years 1860 to 1870, and suggests that these patterns establish transcultural narrative templates that feature the figure of the returned emigrant, either physically or symbolically. For example, Corporaal highlights Sadlier's protagonist, Bessy Conway, as the wealthy returning emigrant who revitalises her Irish family and the family farm. Through the riches Bessy accrued in her domestic job in America, she re-establishes the motherland as a *locus amoenus*, a place of comfort and security. Corporaal and Cusack also discuss the symbolic function of the aforementioned "coffin ships" used on emigrant transatlantic journeys as a rite of passage between the homeland and the host country.

Indeed, Corporaal has paid attention to the portrayals of Irish female characters as starving bodies. The literature of The Great Famine has been thoroughly discussed; however, little attention has been given to the representations of Irish

female characters of 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish literature (Van Os, p. 10). For Van Os, The Great Famine is inseparably linked to all Irish emigrant narratives and is a (re)telling of the story of the “miserable epic Irish families [where] The Famine emigrants become the ‘authentic’ Irish emigrants, the traumatic origin of Irish emigration” (172). Sadlier is described as an emigrant in 1844 who forms part of this “authentic” Irish emigrant group, rendering her recording of the experience through fiction as a valuable source. Indeed, her fiction has an added advantage in that not only do her novels act as a “guidebook” for emigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but, through their literary narrative, they also serve as a reminder of those traumatic episodes in Irish history such as The Great Famine and subsequent waves of emigration. As Corporaal notes, “(l)iterature is among these cultural artifacts which (re)perform the remembrance of the Great Hunger and make these processes of recollection visible” (“Relocated Remembrance”).

“Reconsidering Gender and Nationalism Representations of English Female Characters in Literature of Great Irish Famine, 1851-1870”, by Van Os explores the concept of nationalism as a social construct in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reveals how Irish female writers contributed to constructed Irish identities and nationalism. Analysing four novels written by four Irish authors; Mrs. Hoare (1784-1857), Alice Nolan (n. a.), Edmund and Julia (n. a.), and Sadlier, Van Os analyses the representation of female characters in the selected texts by using gender and postcolonial theoretical frameworks. Her analysis on Sadlier is narrowed to Sadlier’s *New Lights*, where she argues that the female characters in the texts are morally sound (Van Os 6).

In contrast, King examines how Sadlier contributes to a feminisation of the Canadian frontier along with Dublin born emigrant poet Isabella Valancy Crawford (1850-1887). King focuses on Sadlier’s involvement with Thomas D’Arcy McGee and sees her role as “instrumental” in shaping McGee’s vision of creating a self-image for the Canadian Irish ( “Feminisation of Canadian Frontier” 46). King argues that, after McGee’s assassination in 1868, this quest becomes more feminist in tone as both Sadlier and Crawford celebrate the role of the Irish woman in the colonisation of North America. On the other hand, in her study on the Irish servant girl in America, Murphy uses Sadlier’s Bessy Conway as an example of didactic emigrant fiction, where “(s)uch novels were written to warn Irish servant girl readers of occasions of sin: spending money on clothes and going to dances” ( “The Irish Servant Girl” 140).

Keller states that the most neglected body of writing from the historiography of The Great Famine is women’s fictional narratives from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Keller p. 64). Sadlier’s work is one example of this neglected corpus; others include *Shamrock Leaves* (1851) by Mary Anne Hoare (1818-1872) and *Castle Daly* (1875) by Annie Keary (1825-1879). This is puzzling, as Sadlier was one of the most popular and prolific novelists in mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century America yet her works have been overlooked in contemporary research on diasporic studies. One reason for this scholarly oversight could be because the memory of The Great Famine exodus is traumatic and, up until recently, has been couched in silence and largely glossed



over in the Irish canon, a point noted by Eagleton, but refuted by Corporaal as she states, “one could list numerous Irish literary works which, either directly or indirectly, produce cultural memories of the Great Famine” (Corporaal 142). From a different perspective, Landsberg addresses the purpose of memory in an age of mass culture and considers how this memory has been dislocated by modernity and shaped by postmodern technologies such as time-travel. Using the film, *The Road to Yesterday* which premiered in 1925, where the protagonist undergoes a reversed journey to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Landsberg poses an interesting argument, “Bessy gains access to memories of events through which she did not live but which she will take on as her own and which will inform her identity in the film’s present” (Landsberg, p. 1). This is a complex process as Landsberg explains how “the person does not simply apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past even through which he or she did not live [and] the resulting prosthetic memory can shape that person’s subjectivity and politics” (2). As Landsberg notes, memories are not exclusive and can be easily transferred, “(p)rosthetic memories are transportable and therefore challenge more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity, ‘heritage’ and ownership” (3). According to Landsberg, Sadlier uses these prosthetic memories to consolidate her newly formed Irish-American character in subsequent generations, where she discusses the “organic” model of memory, which was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Landsberg posits the view that “(w)hile a cultural form of memory was being articulated, it nevertheless relied on the body as both receptacle for and the transmitter of memory” (7). Although this type of memory could be construed as collective, meaning passed down from one generation to the next, Halbwachs states that collective memories were a social phenomenon and so depended heavily on “the frameworks of social memory”, which included family, religion and class (Halbwachs qtd. in Landsberg 7). Indeed, these are all components found reflected in Sadlier’s emigrant novels.

Nora uses the example of the disappearance of the peasant culture in light of industrial growth to outline his concepts of *lieux de mémoire*: places where “sites” of memory exist because “real environments” of memory do not. According to Nora, “(w)e have seen the end of societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values, whether through churches or schools, the family or the state; the end too of ideologies that prepared a smooth passage from the past to the future” (7). These *lieux de mémoire* or sites of memory are reminders of the past and are manifested in museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals and monuments. Nora also argues that we must produce these mechanisms of memory because there is no more “spontaneous” memory (12) and grapples with the argument of what should be remembered, what is deemed worthy of conservation and who deems it so, stating in the past that it was “great families, the church, and the state” who produced archives, whereas nowadays the proliferation of memoirs has led to the materialisation of memory becoming “tremendously dilated, multiplied, decentralised, democratised” (14). These *lieux de mémoire* occur in Sadlier’s

emigrant novels as reminders of the past for future generations who have no memories of the homeland.

One element of our research is situated within the large body of scholarly research, which is already in place in the historical and social sciences concerning Irish emigration. However, the literary reception of Irish emigration is an area just beginning to open up to scholarly exploration. Little academic work has been conducted to date on the literary representation of gender in the context of emigration to North America. So we set out to further explore the seam opened up by scholars such as Howes and Murphy by examining Sadlier's literary output. Except for the studies of Luddy, the experience of earlier Irish emigrant women has been particularly marginalised due to the lack of primary archival sources relating to their lives.

Hence, our paper aims to contribute to existing literature research on Irish emigrant female writers and diasporic fiction. By considering Sadlier a feminist who did not participate in the feminist movement due to the lack of political platform, she, however, participated in feminist issues by holding female meetings at her home and documented the Irish female immigrants' experiences through her writing ahead of time before Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was born.

Coming from a patriarchal Irish society, May Anne Sadlier, and other authors such as, Alice Nolan were rather politically conservative yet their works indicated strong notions of feminism. Of course, lacking political platforms, writers such as Sadlier could only hope to voice their frustrations towards male hegemony through their works of literature. For most Irish women migrating to America, they had no idea of the power structure and female marginalisation prevalent in America at the time. To guide these young women, Sadlier dedicates her fictitious writings to offering survival tips for these Irish immigrant females in an American society hostile to female immigrants.

The Great Famine caused Sadlier, as an Irish writer, to produce authentic and real literature that documented the serious problems of Irish immigrants. Sadlier herself was an immigrant who had migrated to America as an adult in the 1840s and wrote her migration narratives with a specific purpose in mind as Anna Sadlier, her daughter, clarifies: "(m)ost of them have a history attached to them, and all have some praiseworthy object in view" (331). As can be seen, Sadlier was a supporter of Irish immigrant women, and her narratives were a reaction to the life issues of her time, including the Great Famine, the British persecution of Irish farmers and Irish girls in their homeland, and the persecution of Catholicism. We note how Sadlier engages in feminist problems within her narratives and her migrant narratives also could be seen as an account of Catholicism.

More importantly, Sadlier highlights major persecutions that Irish immigrant women faced in their native land and new land, and these Irish females were able

to stand up again and again without giving up. For example, in pre-Famine Ireland, the father of an Irish daughter was expected to pay a dowry to the father of his daughter's fiancé. After The Great Famine, the Irish fathers were not able to feed their families and to pay dowries for the future husbands of their daughters, which resulted in the migration of Irish women. Sadlier, in fact, addresses all the aforementioned issues through the female characters who migrate to America, and, by analysing Sadlier's writing, this proves that Sadlier's truthful representation of women is the main source of information about Irish immigrant women's (re)action to The Great Famine in Ireland. More significantly, the post-Famine economics changed things towards marriage, resulting in rarer marriages and the development of a marriage system reliant on dowries. A fact which cannot be denied is that the Famine was crucial for Irish immigrant women as it contributed to their lives' experiences and awakening. In her works, Sadlier also highlights the limitations on opportunities in the motherland, which pushed women to migrate, searching for bread, marriage and peace. The Irish had a hard time coming to America, and even the Catholic Italians gave them a hard time. They were looked upon with suspicion by North Eastern American Protestants because of Catholic oppressions of the past.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the literary studies of Irish emigration is an area just recently beginning to open up to scholarly examination. Little academic studies have been conducted to date on the literary representation of females in the context of emigration to America. So we have set out to further explore the themes and issues first generated in previous studies by scholars and by examining Sadlier's literary novels. Hence, our paper contributes to a rethinking of a more critical and holistic nature of the representation of Irish female immigrants in order to complete the picture of the emigrant experience.

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