



A Winter in Bath, 1796–97: Life Writing and the Irish Adolescent Self

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Abstract

The diary form affords multiple generations of women with a vehicle for expressing themselves, and is particularly germane to younger writers, developing a voice, and shaping a sense of self as they emerge from childhood. Charting her travels from Ireland to Bath, the manuscript diary (1796–97) of Charity Lecky is exceptionally useful in exploring intersections with other genres, particularly the novel, while also affording us with an adolescent's observations on life, and on Bath as international marriage market. The categories of youth, gender, and nation all play strong roles in Charity's evolving sense of self, and enable us to explore these intersections and how they can inform a young person's sense of worth. Frequently dismissed by male contemporaries as preoccupied only with balls and marriage prospects, the voices of such figures were repeatedly marginalised. This article prioritises both these voices and the diary form itself, and fuses their legitimate interest in courtship with a concern and fascination with national identity, recognising the value of young women's opinions, and demonstrating how we might better understand the evolution of personal identities through inclusion of such source material.

Keywords: Diary, Gender, Nationality, Adolescence

Diaries from eighteenth-century Ireland offer first-hand accounts of women's daily activities and concerns, their intellectual formation, educational development, spiritual engagement, and perceived personal successes and failures. These diaries offered Protestant women in Ireland a platform that proved cross-generational in appeal, with women of all ages engaged in journal-keeping.¹ The breadth of ages is immediately apparent in a survey of those diaries that survive from the late 1790s: the diary of Anne Jocelyn, Countess of Roden (1730–1802) embodies that of the older woman, contemplating her life's achievements and her role as grandmother, as well as mother to fellow diarist Harriet Skeffington;² the entries of Marianne Fortescue (1767–1849) showcase the preoccupations of a middle-aged woman, tending to her husband and children, and reflecting on the Irish Rebellion of 1798; whilst the youthful enthusiasm and aspirations within the diary of Elizabeth Edgeworth (1781–1800) are cut short by her premature death from tuberculosis when the diarist is still in her teens.³ The diary form provides all these generations of women with a vehicle for expressing themselves, but it is particularly germane to younger writers. Developing a voice, and shaping a sense of selfhood as they emerge from childhood, these diarists seek models to identify with and which to emulate, while attempting to portray a coherent sense of self. By engaging closely with the diary of Charity Lecky, in Bath from Ireland in the winter of 1796–97, this article will further our understanding of how adolescent writers use the diary form, providing an intersectional analysis of youth, gender, and national identity.

Life writing is key to our understanding of women's participation in manuscript culture and literary culture more broadly. Analysis of diaries enables us to recognise women's creativity, and their engagement with a developing textual form that allowed them to explore their subjectivity and to experiment with narrative voice and style. This is particularly true in the case of young girls entering adolescence and attempting to articulate their emerging sense of selfhood. Though dating from the late nineteenth century, the term adolescent can be applied constructively to earlier periods, allowing recognition of the many continuities in adolescent behavioural patterns and attitudes, particularly those related to an emerging sense of selfhood, evident in life writing.⁴ While the Irish diarists are motivated to write from a variety of reasons, and are drawn from across the Protestant denominations and social classes, one notable feature in many diaries charting this life stage is the spectrum of emotion evoked by the prospect of marriage and entrance into the marriage market, sparking anticipation and excitement, but also trepidation and anxiety.⁵ These emotions are filtered and selected by the diarists as they attempt to navigate these fraught,

transitional moments and environments, and to craft a mature diurnal voice as part of their quest for coherent representation of the self.

As the marriage market itself developed in the later eighteenth century, Bath became recognised, alongside London, as one of the most popular international marriage markets.⁶ Characterised as ‘the resort of the inhabitants of all climates and of people of every age and description’,⁷ Bath came to provide the setting for the unfolding of various marriage plots and their contingent narrative complications, with the mixing of people from different locale.⁸ Consequently, Bath became an invaluable site for comparative analyses and socio-cultural observations across literature, with Frances Sheridan’s play *A Journey to Bath* (c. 1765) and her son Richard Brinsley’s *The Rivals* (1775) representing key examples, alongside novels by Jane Austen, Frances Burney, and Amelia Opie. In addition to its role in the development of the novel and the marriage plot, a visit to the town was frequently the motivation behind the creation of a diary. Being a space that promoted pageantry and self-exhibition, the visitor to Bath could present themselves to a new audience, while simultaneously observing others do the same, with everyone engaged in the moulding and formation of character.⁹ Particularly attractive to young people, Bath affords the adolescent diarist the opportunity to position herself amongst those from different countries, allowing the crafting of a distinctive narrative voice, based upon a spectrum of affiliation.

One diary, surviving in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, coexists exclusively with the young diarist’s journey to and from Bath, and her time in that city in the winter of 1796–97, providing us with the opportunity to assess the adolescent self within a national framework.¹⁰ Catalogued as anonymous, but written by a female member of the Lecky family from Co. Derry in Ireland, Charity Lecky, born in 1782, is the most likely author.¹¹ This previously-overlooked, 90-page diary affords us with an adolescent’s observations on life and the self. The diary provides us with the observations of a 14-15-year-old on a variety of people and places, frequently considered through the lens of national affiliation. The categories of youth, gender, and nation all play strong roles in the diarist’s evolving sense of self, and enable us to explore these intersections and how they can inform a young person’s sense of worth. Exploration of Charity Lecky’s diary allows us to investigate the creation of a distinctive narrative voice, one that draws upon the epistolary novels of the eighteenth century, while also interrogating the diarist’s foregrounding of questions of nation, and exploring the anxieties and interests of a young Irish girl negotiating a new environment, being observed by potential partners and observing others. Entries charting friendships and flirting coexist with others fearing singlehood and pining for

a certain body shape, consistent with our sense of adolescent diaries from later periods.¹² Frequently dismissed by male contemporaries as preoccupied only with balls and marriage prospects, the voices of young women and adolescents were repeatedly marginalised, as Charity's entries make clear. This article prioritises both these voices and the diary form itself, and fuses their legitimate interest in courtship with a concern and fascination with national identity, recognising the value of young women's opinions, and demonstrating how we might better understand the evolution of personal identities through inclusion of such source material.

The Development of a Novel Voice

Just as the earlier spiritual diary draws on a variety of secular forms, particularly account books, but also travel diaries, almanacs, and chronicles, the eighteenth-century diary is also in dialogue with many literary forms, with diarists notably engaging with travel narratives and first-person fictions.¹³ Charity Lecky's diary is exceptionally useful in exploring intersections with emerging genres, particularly the novel, and offers the possibility of identifying and exploring connections between life writing and realism, sentimentalism, the picaresque, and the Gothic. One crucial influence upon Lecky's diary is Tobias Smollett's picaresque novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). There are many echoes of that epistolary novel throughout Lecky's diary, and the character of Lydia Melford seems to have provided the very model for Charity Lecky's portrayal of herself, such are the similarities in expression, phrases, and markers of both adolescents' youth and ostensible naiveté, as well as their later confidence and maturity. Additionally, there are multiple narrative parallels in evidence throughout, including of course the seventeen-year old Lydia's visit to Bath, but also the journey as a whole. Travel from the periphery to the metropole, whether it be from provincial Ireland or Wales, represents the core motivation behind the two texts, with both novel and diary engaging with the experiences of marginality and the realities of the marriage market. However, in Smollett's novels, including *Humphry Clinker*, we see the 'marginalised protagonists' progress towards a British identity', whereas in Lecky's diary what we are presented with is the overt celebration of an inclusive Irishness.¹⁴ This is accompanied by simultaneous reflections upon the multi-cultural nature of British identity, one very much composed of discrete national identities.¹⁵ Charity Lecky's experience of travel through Britain provokes reflections on questions of national affiliation and the adolescent sense of self, particularly through her assessment of prospective partners and mixed-gender associational life in light of questions of nationality. It also prompts

consideration of issues of inclusivity, diversity, and multinationalism, all remarkably pertinent to contemporary discourses surrounding shifting concepts of Britishness, Irishness and Europeanness.¹⁶

A wide variety of formal mechanisms and narrative structures are drawn upon in creating a diary, while published travel writings are frequently used as inspiration for diarists who are writing whilst away from home, espousing the functionality of the travel journal.¹⁷ Another diarist in Bath from Ireland in 1797 was the 30-year-old Marianne Fortescue, of Co. Louth. Fortescue's preference is largely for short sentences in an unornamented style. She generally employs the past tense and the pluperfect, as well as the progressive present perfect in order to carefully record daily events and calibrate her emotional state. Fortescue's writing also displays the 'iterative patterning' recognised as characteristic of women's espousal of journal writing in particular.¹⁸ It is clear that Charity Lecky is taking care with her recordings and experimenting with styles. She seems cognisant of the possibility of using the diary format as one in which to hone her style and her method of communication. This is in opposition to her impression of her own clumsiness while speaking, such as when she is the recipient of a gift, which 'I was very thankful for, but, as usual I lost all power of articulation at that time & could scarcely say I was obliged to her' (17-3-1797). The written diary allows her more time to compose her thoughts and communicate her opinions, judgements, and observations, working through her thoughts on questions of self, nation, and age in particular, as she undertakes her journey. Charity Lecky's diary presents us with an excited, impressed, and at times mesmerised perspective on Bath. It draws upon a highly-charged style of writing, and her account of life there is one loaded with hyperbole, with one superlative following another in a breathless, excited style so that she describes events and interactions as being the best ever encountered or experienced: 'it was one of the pleasantest entertainments I had ever been at' (24-1-1797); 'the most beautiful elegant dance I ever saw' (3-3-1797). Such superlatives remind us of the writer's youth, and suggest one well versed in the novels of the day, rather than an adherent to the conduct literature targeted at her age group.¹⁹

Her descriptions of Gothic landscapes with portending precipices and sublime landscapes on her way to and from Bath are quintessentially Radcliffean in composition. Her journey is communicated with a sense of danger and menace, so that the writer is confronted by 'a dreadful rock hanging over as if ready to tumble on the road - so steep that we were in danger of falling over the horses' (11-5-1797), before coming face to face with 'another shocking mountain where we had the open ocean to the right & a tremendous rock to the left' (ibid). Such descriptions set the

diarist up as the heroine of the composition, facing such circumstances with courage and strength. She is a Julia or an Emilia overcoming obstacles and avoiding dangerous accidents, all conveyed with a narrative depth akin to that of a novel. Indeed, Charity Lecky's diary repeatedly echoes the tone of those letters written by Smollett's Lydia Melford, emulating their freshness and excitement. Lydia's writing style is also one infused with hyperbole and superlatives, 'We went accordingly to Lough Lomond, one of the most enchanting spots in the whole world.'²⁰ Her style is also imbued with excess sensibility, wherein encounters and friendships with other young women are met with deep joys, sorrows, and aspirations: 'I hope, the friendship we contracted at boarding-school, will last for life ... O, my dear Letty.' (10). The character's epistolary correspondence with Laetitia Willis showcases that privileging of friendship so often associated with adolescence, wherein one notes a quest for independence, and a rebellion against parental structures.²¹ We can note such markers of sensibility and high-charged friendships throughout Charity Lecky's diary too. Taking leave of a friend, for example, is recorded with dramatic flair, 'Miss S bid us adieu, I fear for ever, we have but little chance of meeting in this world again.' (2-11-1796).

While Charity Lecky makes use of the popular Gothic tropes of the 1790s for her descriptions of the dangerous carriage ride, the device of the carriage spill itself is of course central to the plot of *Humphry Clinker*, allowing the eponymous character's true identity to be revealed.²² The nature of travel permits the fictional letter writer to encounter new environs and new people, and the journey from Wales to Bath undertaken by Lydia – related to us alongside the voices of her brother, uncle, aunt, and aunt's maid – foregrounds issues of nationality and difference. During her own travels across Britain, while Charity Lecky is remarking upon the customs and differences that she is presented with, those she encounters also seek to determine the diarist's own origins.²³ A fellow coach traveller engaged her, for example, and 'asked me if I was not a Scot, to which I answered in the affirmative, at the same time shewing the ribbons by which my scissors & pin cushion were fastened as a proof that what I said was not quite out of the way (they both Plaid)' (28-10-1796). Charity Lecky's family were of Scottish origin, descendants of Captain Alexander Leckie (1631–1717), son of the 11th Laird of Leckie, who moved to Ireland from Leckie, Stirling in Scotland. Captain Leckie acted as commissioner on behalf of the city during the Siege of Derry in 1688.²⁴ This siege was explicitly commemorated one hundred years later, during the election campaign of 1790, in which the diarist's own father was elected to serve as Member of Parliament in the House of Commons in Dublin, a role he filled until 1797:

After the mayor had declared Lecky elected, reformers had carried their new MP from the town hall in a chair made from one of the gates that had stood the Siege. They placed the chair on a square pedestal, from which rose four green pillars ... supporting a circular canopy ... The city arms and the words 'The Relief of Derry 1790' appeared on the front of the canopy and, on the top there was a green silk flag, displaying the Irish Harp, a wreath of shamrocks, and the inscription *Pro Patria Semper* [Always for my country].²⁵

As N.C. Fleming and others have noted, the shamrock held an appeal 'not just for Catholics but for the state, members of the establishment in general, and for protestants of "enlightened" views.'²⁶ In the embracing of Irish symbols here, we can see a disconnect between an exclusive association of such symbols with those subscribing to Gaelic ethnicity and Catholicism.²⁷ Used in a different way, and to commemorate an incident of Protestant success, the same symbols later espoused by nationalists are here used by Ulster MPs to highlight their commitment to an explicitly Irish identity. While the public symbolisms inherent in the election campaign and the written recording of speeches were the preserve of men, the donning of Irish symbols and the commitment of such adornment to paper were clearly avenues open to Charity Lecky, whose diary also features symbols of Irishness: 'Friday March 17th being Patrick's Day I mounted a large Shamrock in my hat.' (17-3-1797). Thus, the diarist is careful to adorn herself with a visual signifier of her connection to Ireland, as well as to note and explore this facet of her identity within her diary.²⁸

While one still finds examples in the 1790s of diarists from Ireland either ignoring or vociferously rejecting any Irish elements of their identity – such as in the diary of Marianne Fortescue or in that of the poet and writer Melesina Trench (1768–1826) – with the diary of Charity Lecky we see someone explicitly acknowledging and indeed celebrating and embracing these Irish elements, and defending the character of her Roman Catholic countrymen and women. The early modern origins of the diary form foreground its fundamental connections with Protestantism. Concepts of self-accounting and improvement, wherein the writer seeks to account for their failings and achievements without the confessional sacrament available to Catholics, are intrinsic to the development of various Protestant faiths.²⁹ By the middle of the eighteenth century, a shift away from the primarily religious, spiritual diaries had taken place, but these more secular works were still composed principally by those belonging to the Protestant faith.³⁰ Contemporary historians still posit how 'Protestantism was central to the concept of what it meant to be British', and Lecky's very act of writing a diary mark her out from the majority of her fellow Irish women,

as an activity associated with Protestant faiths.³¹ Yet it is the diary that allows her a platform for exploring her Irishness and provides her with the opportunity to conceptualise an Irish identity that is encompassing and diverse in its composition, frequently placing it at the forefront of her sense of self. Her pride in Irish successes is explicitly signalled on numerous occasions: 'went to see the -- curious pieces of mechanism which seemed to have rational powers, & I gloried they were all made by an Irishman.' (22-11-1796). Charity Lecky's initial journey across both countries culminates in her arrival in Bath, where she is presented with a vast marriage market composed of men and women from across Europe. She uses the diary form both to better negotiate Bath and to comprehend her own position, employing the diary entries to interpret and scrutinise her encounters. The diary reveals an increasing awareness of the limitations imposed on Charity by both her gender and her age, communicated through a diurnal voice that closely echoes those of the young women featured in contemporary novels, as she meticulously records her interactions with those of the opposite sex.

'I got plenty of Dancing & most Excellent partners – English Irish & Frenchmen': Cosmopolitan Courtship

Entrance into the marriage market represented a transitional moment in the lives of middle-class young women, as they attempted to gain social advancement and assist their families by marrying well.³² This was frequently met with anticipation and anxiety, as the whole education and social formation of girls was calculated for their entrance into society, where they were to be displayed by older family members. The opening of Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) famously disparages the actions of Mrs Stanhope, who took every opportunity 'of showing her niece off', as Clarence Hervey describes, '...for last winter, when I was at Bath, she was hawked about every where, and the aunt was puffing her with might and main...' ³³ Lydia Melford's eschewal of the proper avenues of courtship and the marriage market lead to her removal from boarding school after the discovery of an unapproved courtship with an actor going by the name of Wilson, with whom she intends to elope. Lydia later reforms, adheres to behaviours expected of her, and resumes her relationship with the young man under proper supervision and less morally dubious surrounds, her moral reformation further signalled by her new preference for the country over the town.³⁴ Several days before arriving in Bath, Charity Lecky encountered those steps in the city walls of Chester, built in 1785, known as the Wishing Steps. Her companions encourage her to hold her breath until she reaches the top, and to make a wish. Her diary records that

she directs this wish towards the successful acquisition of ‘good partners at the Bath balls’, ruminating that ‘experience will decide whether it has any effect or not.’ (27-10-1796). Lecky is aware of the pressures upon her, and is fearful of becoming an older unmarried woman, or an ‘old maid’: ‘2 sisters lodging in the house... one of them an old maid... (God grant I may not be one)’ (2-11-1796).³⁵

Charity Lecky is primarily viewed as a commodity upon the Bath marriage market, there to be inspected and assessed by all drawn there from different countries. Early in the diary, the writer laments the tendency of adults to assess her developing body and remark upon her recent physical changes: ‘but then visiting and being visited & the like began, & I was tired of hearing how tall I was grown, & some saying they’d have known me, and others not etc etc.’ (2-11-1796). This attitude of inspection intensifies during her stay in Bath, when it becomes clear that Charity Lecky, and in particular her physical appearance, is constantly being scrutinized, as she is regarded as a potential partner. This process is all the more intimidating as, given Bath’s international visitors, the scrutiny is sometimes conducted in a language Charity does not understand. Her appearance is dissected by the Prince of Orange and his wife, for example, the latter of whom, ‘fixed her eyes on me, came close & stared in my face - smiled at me & then patting the Stadtholder made him look round at me - they conversed for some time in Dutch - ever & anon looking steadfastly at me.’ (3-1-1797). This joint assessment by both sexes is not an isolated incident, nor is the ensuing oral appraisal. On another occasion, Charity is again subjected to intense scrutiny, this time in the English language:

[Major M] examined me from top to toe, at least as much of me as he could see, & then after ... he went to a Lady & directed her to look at me – she is cursedly wrong said she pretty loud... she is ugly for all that. (7-11-1796).

Lecky sarcastically notes that, ‘this was entertaining’, and such comments must have been difficult to internalize. Her diary contains numerous occasions wherein she reflects upon her appearance and the manner in which she is perceived by others, regretting her outmoded clothing on one date, and her unfashionable hairstyle on another.³⁶ One entry, which was simply recording her day, is intercut with the parenthetical comment, ‘(I wish I was thin)’.³⁷ The linking of personal value and worth with physical appearance seems to be constantly at the back of Charity Lecky’s mind, interfering with her sense of self and her daily achievements.

Lecky does however engage in some scrutiny herself, ‘I sat next General Erwin & examining him from top to toe, & listening to all he said I liked him better than any

other man I had seen since I came to Bath' (5-12-1796). Here we see the diarist use the identical expression applied to her, so that the assessment is not quite as one-directed as it at first appears. Though many entries illustrate her naiveté and inexperience,³⁸ there are also hints of flirtation and of her welcome popularity amongst the opposite sex: 'I had beaux enough and flirted a little' (22-2-1797).³⁹ Like Lydia initially, Charity is enjoying these newfound attentions and freedoms, and certainly appraising prospective candidates. Indeed, while Lecky and other young girls, including fictional counterparts such as Edgeworth's Belinda or Frances Burney's Evelina, are at a disadvantage, and are subjected to constant appraisal, this diary makes clear that Charity Lecky herself is in pursuit of a partner, if not always for life, then at least symbolically, for the duration of the ball, and that the partner that she wishes for is explicitly an Irishman.⁴⁰

Literature contains many examples of Irish men and women travelling to Bath seeking their fortune in the form of a husband or wife. Indeed, Lydia's initial descriptions of Bath in *Humphry Clinker* describe 'A great many gentlemen and ladies of Ireland' (41), and the stereotype of the Irish fortune hunter is prevalent across a variety of texts from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴¹ The first outing of the figure of Sheridan's belligerent Irishman, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, led to the character's revision in subsequent performances of *The Rivals*, though his mistaken pursuit of Lydia Languish remained, while Mrs O'Donolly embodies the caricature of the older widow travelling to Bath to 'gain a second husband' in *A Winter in Bath* (1807). A more sinister example is observable in Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1804), which reveals the intents of the libertine Sir Patrick O'Carrol, 'a young Irishman, of an old family but an encumbered estate; and it was his wish to set his estate free by marrying a rich wife, and one as little disagreeable as possible. With this view he came to Bath...' ⁴² In Charity Lecky's search for dance partners, we repeatedly note an explicit preference for the company of Irishmen: 'I was very well entertained & met a number of acquaintances – a countryman of my own' (21-1-1797). Equally, she declines an escort to walk her home, hoping to once again be accompanied by a countryman, 'there was another who I was intimate with who had before engaged to do me that service & was besides an Irish & a married man' (8-2-1797). The man's nationality is underscored to clearly communicate this element of his character as conveying a respectability, reliability, and, finally, a degree of suitability, as being one of her own, as she expresses above. Equally, Lecky acknowledges, albeit parenthetically, the regret and dissatisfaction experienced when it is an Irishman who ignores her at a dance: 'Alas he is an Irishman but this (disappointment as it was) did not take from me any pleasure I would have had if he was not there' (21-11-1796).

The Irishmen are but one nationality in attendance at the Bath balls, and the international composition of Charity Lecky's dancing partners is made clear in the following entry, which places the Irish partners alongside those from France and England:

I got plenty of Dancing & most Excellent partners – English Irish & Frenchmen, & here I lamented much not being able to talk French for some of my partners could scarce speak a word of English, & I feared to attempt speaking French, so that we had but little conversation, but the Irishmen made up for it. (24-1-1797).

Charity Lecky acknowledges that she is unable to speak French, and her diary French is limited to a smattering of expressions such as 'le jeune Mr J' and 'I was the only fille on deck'. Her inadequacies in the language limit her opportunities for conversing with potential suitors and attracting a partner. However, rather than overly lamenting this loss, the diarist emphasises the pleasures of conversing in English, and specifically in conversing with the Irishmen mentioned, and not their English counterparts. Knowledge of the French language was a competency generally shared by many elite women in eighteenth-century Ireland, as attested to by the numerous instances of the language's employment across surviving letters from the period, as well as by the smaller numbers of women engaged in the process of translation.⁴³ In addition to these elite women, and Catholics educated abroad, the third cohort who embraced the language were descendants of Huguenot refugees, such as the diarist Melesina Chenevix Trench. Trench converses in French throughout her writing, and her diary is peppered with French expressions, in addition to Latin phrases. As the diary progresses, there are entire paragraphs exclusively in French. She also describes speaking in 'bad German'.⁴⁴ One gets a sense of the privileging of an encompassing European identity in her diary, emanating from a core English rather than Irish perspective, with almost no sense of Trench thinking herself Irish at all. Indeed, she casts herself in the role of 'English traveller', and her references to England and Englishness (rather than Britishness) suggest a sense of connection, affiliation, and assimilation.⁴⁵

Knowledge of French and its employment could be used to signal one's belonging to a broader European world, as well as to the Republic of Letters, incorporating this dimension into an Irish identity. The cosmopolitan European aspirations and achievements of numerous figures from Ireland are apparent in the life writing that survives from the eighteenth century, as well as in contemporary scholarship, such as Clíona Ó Gallchoir's work on Maria Edgeworth.⁴⁶ There is an absence of such a sense

of Europeanness in Lecky's diary, and any hint of a transnational identity is limited to either side of the Irish Sea. While second language acquisition increased the opportunity of gaining a partner in a multilingual environment, and secured access to certain elite circles, the use of French could also be used to erase markers of difference. Several Irish diaries from the same period as Charity Lecky's record the tendency of Irish men and women of all ages to speak French rather than English in order to disguise their Irish origins. For example, as the novelist Elizabeth Sheridan (1758–1837) relates, 'Our Irish Doctor is very civil and talks french in Public, as he says "to *hide* his Brogue" I talk'd little but French the Whole evening...' ⁴⁷ Sheridan herself had been accused of having accented English during her time in London, much to her father's disgust, who dismissed any such suggestions. James Caulfield, the first Earl of Charlemont, goes further in his comment that, 'the Irishman in London, long before he has lost his brogue, loses or casts away all Irish ideas, and, from a natural wish to obtain the goodwill of those with whom he associates, becomes, in effect, a partial Englishman. Perhaps more partial than the English themselves.' ⁴⁸

Such manoeuvres and the accompanying desire to distance oneself from signifiers of difference, particularly in relation to nation, are entirely absent from Charity Lecky's diary. Throughout the work as a whole there is a clear sense of Lecky's pride in Ireland and those from that country. This echoes a general trend from the late eighteenth century, with the promotion of Irish language, culture, and customs being celebrated in the salons at Moira House in Dublin, for example, and in the work of those connected to that salon, such as writing by Joseph Cooper Walker and Charlotte Brooke. ⁴⁹ Those from different backgrounds are shown as embracing markers of Irishness and incorporating them into their work and their own sense of identity. Again and again, the reader encounters the diarist's approval of Irish achievements, and Irish people, and indeed her praising of those who compliment them, for example, 'liked the young Mrs Chapman very much for her liking the Irish people & their & my country, where she had spent some years' (15-12-1796). ⁵⁰ She is presenting herself as a strong supporter of her country, and one intent on defending Ireland from its detractors, despite the taunts of those who might dismiss her opinions based on her age and her gender.

'Young girls are not admitted': Mixed-Gender Sociability and Age

While mixed-gender associational life in eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland was limited for women, who were generally denied access to societies, clubs, coffee houses, and taverns, diaries from Bath generally celebrate the many opportunities for

mixed-gender socialising to be found in that city. Marianne Fortescue's diary, for example, attests to her attendance at balls in the Upper and Lower assembly rooms, and records bands performing in the pump room, as well as music performances in the Harmonic Society. Elizabeth Sheridan's accounts of her time in Bath frequently mention inter-generational conversations between men and women, with most discussions involving her own father, as well as other literary family duos present there from Ireland, such as Charlotte and Henry Brooke, best known as the authors of *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789) and *The Fool of Quality* (1766–70) respectively.⁵¹ More unusually perhaps, Charity Lecky's diary also offers glimpses of the diarist's incursions into mixed-gender conversations on the traditionally-male topics of religion and religious dissent, as well as politics.⁵² Aileen Douglas argues that Lydia Melford gains insight and independence as the summer progresses, and in Lecky's diary we see the diarist develop increased self-control, command, agency, and, perhaps, even maturity.⁵³ One entry notes her own error in judging others, for example, 'I must not forget to mention how very wrong I am in giving way to prejudice & forming an opinion of anyone by their 1st appearance – took him to be a 'would-be gentleman' but much sense & spirit, express himself with piety' (1-11-1796), while on another occasion she recognises her naiveté after being avoided by one who had promised her a dance, declaring, 'this affair will make me in future doubt those who brag or talk much or make many offers' (21-11-1796).

Charity Lecky is extremely proud of her inclusion in conversations with certain men who do not dismiss her opinions outright, recounting how she found herself in the midst of certain conversations where it was generally thought that young women should not be permitted. During her own visit to Bath, Lydia Melford mentions her exclusion from intellectual discussions on account of her youth and gender, 'Hard by the Pump-room, is a coffee house for the ladies; but my aunt says, young girls are not admitted, inasmuch as the conversation turns upon politics, scandal, philosophy, and other subjects above our capacity.' (40). However, our diarist records over ten accounts of explicitly mixed-gender conversation, with religion the subject of debate on at least three occasions, as well as the abovementioned politics: 'Mr Tassoon almost as he entered the room began to speak on Religious subjects & politics' (15-12-1796). Charity notes the respect with which her opinions are greeted by a few men who do not dismiss her views out of hand: 'Dr Bridges sat beside me & conversed as if he considered me more on a line with himself, or rather as a being who had a soul & some rationality than as an insignificant trifler which is the light men seems to me to view the younger part of our sex in general.' (21-12-1796).⁵⁴ Both quotations explicitly differentiate younger and older women, with the former seen as overly erratic, and

with a limited mental capacity, while it seems the latter may be admissible in certain circumstances. This is almost a direct inversion of the spatial realities of the assembly rooms in Bath, whereby the infamous rule stated that older women be relegated along with those who had not yet reached adolescence: ‘elder ladies and children be contented with a second bench at the ball, as being past, or not come to perfection.’⁵⁵

Charity’s transgression into these realms cause her to witness reflections on religion and politics that inevitably lead to commentary and utterances that become heated and controversial. One remarkable entry from Christmas Day 1796 encapsulates the different strands of the writer’s own sense of self, as well as her interactions with and treatment by others in Bath:

he got very warm speaking against the Roman Catholick Religion & said he would as soon trust himself with the Devil as with one of them, I could not help saying (for the honour of Ireland) that there were many of whom I had as good an opinion as to their truth, honesty & fidelity in that Religion as any other, & said everything I could in their favour. He turning sharp on me replied – I was too young to know anything about Religion, that no doubt plays Balls, Cards Concerts took up my time too much to have any to spare on the one thing needful. (25-12-1796).

Here, we again see the diarist taking pride in Ireland and defending and championing its honour. The Roman Catholic Irish are here to be defended explicitly for the sake of Ireland’s honour, as they form part of the make-up of the wider community. Their nationality sees Charity Lecky align herself with those of a different religion as she seeks to protect their reputation. The qualities she holds up for praise are truth, honesty, and fidelity. In the midst of many falsehoods circulated in the 1790s, several women sought to convince others of the fallacies being promulgated, and instead aimed to highlight the decency they perceived within the Catholic population.⁵⁶ The correspondence of Elizabeth Rawdon, Lady Moira (1731–1808), for example, frequently refutes claims of Catholic violence and asserts the fabrication of events by others: ‘and that the Roman Catholics are to cut the throats of all the Protestants – In the course of the forty years I have belonged to this kingdom, that alarm has been yearly spread, without the least appearance & probability of such a danger.’⁵⁷ Disallowed from making speeches in the Irish parliament in the fashion of her husband or son, both of whom engaged in politics to differing degrees, Lady Moira asserts her opinions via the written and circulated word, utilising the letter as a means to communicate her views, and obtain an additional and powerful public platform. One of Ireland’s foremost salon hostesses, an older woman at the apex of elite Irish

society, Lady Moira's opinions carry a certain weight and may influence those of high social standing at the close of the century. In 1790s Bath, Charity Lecky's youth and gender contribute to her opinion being immediately and summarily dismissed as that belonging to a young girl, one ostensibly too fixated on the associational life on offer to adequately understand the situation in Ireland. Her account of this challenge with an elder male portrays the two as pseudo-villain and pseudo-heroine, defaming and protecting Ireland respectively. The exchange also shows Charity Lecky willing to defy conduct book notions of propriety by expressing opinions on such a subject. It is the diary form that affords the young woman a platform to explore these opinions, to create a narrative voice, and to record her defence of the Roman Catholic Irish, as part of her understanding of both nation and national identity, despite her status as young, unmarried girl. Her diary writing enables her to construct a sense of self, and to process such encounters and dismissals, as part of her attempts at negotiating the transition into adulthood.

Conclusions

Bath offers a particularly rich site for considerations of the intersections between adolescent selfhood, life writing, and national identity, through its functioning as a highly attractive and popular leisure town and international marriage market, offering potential and committed diarists the opportunity for self-fashioning and self-presentation both in the assembly rooms and upon the page. A certain degree of performativity is clearly possible, as younger diarists in particular respond to other models and examples in their attempts to communicate a sense of self. Often embracing the tone, expressions, and even plot emphases of *Humphry Clinker*, the diary form is used by Charity Lecky to mediate her daily experiences away from home, and to situate herself in her new environment, establishing a sense of self through markers of engagement, affiliation, and signifiers of belonging, as well as through either condemnation or celebration of the actions of others. Charity Lecky's diary presents us with the crafting of a sense of self shaped to a large degree by responses to a developing notion of an inclusive Irishness in the late eighteenth century, incorporating those of different backgrounds and faiths. The national identities she is presented with penetrate her creation of a coherent self, and shape her interpretation of her position within Bath and within British and Irish society, with varying results and emphases.

While Lecky's diary offers a distinctly personal perspective on Irish identity, it also echoes the universal experiences endured by those of her youth and gender in a

society that dismissed and devalued the opinions of adolescent girls, who are routinely advised by guardians and conduct manuals not to appear too learned or intellectual.⁵⁸ While casting herself as Irish, and explicitly embracing this facet of an identity that others strove to conceal, Charity Lecky's gender and age inescapably form part of her lived experience of Bath. Her navigation of the Bath marriage market, with its contingent dancing and mixed-gender associational life, involve her person being dissected and rated; her body objectified; and her opinions dismissed. However, this article has shown how the diary form can function as a platform for such adolescents to record their beliefs and judgements, and to commit these opinions to the page when dismissed in person. Charity's diary allows her to highlight her Irishness, her youth, and her gender throughout the myriad entries. These entries come together to communicate a lively narrative that replicates the cadences of those novels popular throughout Britain and Ireland. The diary form enables Charity to record her own opinions and perspectives – her defence of those from a Roman Catholic background; her celebration of Irish successes; and her belief in the validity of the opinions of young people, for example. Charity's diary during her visit to Bath in the winter of 1796–97 allows her to better understand her own sense of selfhood and to navigate her place in the world, assisting her in the transition from childhood to adulthood.

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¹ Surviving diaries from eighteenth-century Ireland are almost exclusively composed by those subscribing to Protestantism, whether Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, or Quaker.

² See the special issue edited by Margaret O’Neill and Michaela Schrage-Früh, ‘Women and Ageing: Private Meaning, Social Lives’, *Life Writing* 16:1 (2019) 1-148.

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⁵ Although often suggesting connotations of affluence, diary writing should not be thought of as a strict indicator of class among female diarists in Ireland so much as it is of religious affiliation. For some it was an elite leisure activity, for others it represented a crucial spiritual duty.

⁶ For Georgian Bath, see Borsay, Peter. *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

⁷ Anon. ‘Review. *A Winter in Bath; by the Author of two popular Novels*. 4 Vols. Crosby. 1807,’ from *The Critical Review, Or, Annals of Literature* 3.XI. London, 1807 (291).

⁸ Visually illustrated in Moretti, Franco. *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900*. London and New York: Verso, 1999 (21).

⁹ Gores, Steven. *Psychosocial Spaces: Verbal and Visual Readings of British Culture, 1750-1820*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2000.

¹⁰ Diary of a Winter in Bath, 1796–1797. James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Osborn c446.

¹¹ Notes on the diary by Centa Thompson, who also transcribed the work in the early twentieth century, suggests that the diary is by her grandmother, Hannah Lecky, née McCausland (1751–1826). However, Hannah could not have written the diary as she was middle aged and married with children by this time. Instead, I would posit that the diary was written by one of the daughters of Hannah and her husband William (1748–1825), M.P. for Derry. The couple had four surviving daughters – Jane Matilda, Charity, Sydney, and Elizabeth. The diarist refers to letters to Jane and Sydney, so that she could potentially be Charity or Elizabeth. The latter is too young, being only ten at this point, making Charity, born 1782, the most likely author.

¹² Kirsch, Hiltrud Susanna. ‘The Body in Adolescent Diaries, The Case of Karen Horney.’ *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 57:1 (2002) 400-410.

¹³ Ryrie, Alec. *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford: OUP, 2013 (301). The interconnections between diaries, letters, and travel writing have long been recognised, with Arthur Young classifying his epistolary travel accounts as diaries in the 1780s, and the *Monthly Review* ‘opining that “the form of a journal” is “the natural form for travels”’ Batten Jr., Charles L., *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel*. Los Angeles: U of California Press, 1978, p.38. See also Smith, Amy Elizabeth, ‘Travel Narratives and the Familiar Letter Form in the Mid-Eighteenth Century Studies’ in *Philology* 95:1 (1998) 77-96; and Yáñez-Bouza, Nuria, “‘Have you ever written a diary or a journal?’” *Diurnal Prose and Register Variation*. *Neuphilologischce Mitteilungen* 116:2 (2015) 449-474.

¹⁴ Shields, Juliet. ‘Tobias Smollett, Novelist: Brutish or British?’ *Oxford Handbooks Online*.

¹⁵ Lecky's immediate observations on place and nation position language as being of central importance in allowing for markers of difference, and indeed as a guide to establishing geographical location. On her way to Bath, having passed through Ellesmere, the diarist admits, 'whether this is a Welsh or an English town I know not, but I believe it to be the former for I heard people speaking Welsh.' (28-10-1796).

¹⁶ She stereotypes the English 'in general' as being woefully lacking in curiosity, for example (28-10-1796).

¹⁷ While there are no mentions of specific published travel narratives within Lecky's diary, we know that Marianne Fortescue was reading Giuseppe Baretti's four-volume *A Journey from London to Genoa through England, Portugal, Spain, and France* (1770) during the composition of her own diary from the same year. The distinction between fictional and non-fictional travel narratives during this period is often tenuous, and it is clear that Lecky and other diarists draw from both intertwined traditions. See Arthur, Paul Longley, 'Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyage to the Antipodes.' *The Eighteenth Century* 49:3 (2008) 197-210; and O'Loughlin, Katrina, *Women, Writing, and Travel in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: CUP, 2018.

¹⁸ Matchinske, Megan. 'Serial Identity: History, Gender and Form in the Diary Writing of Lady Anne Clifford.' In: Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle, (eds.), *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England* London: Routledge, 2016.

¹⁹ While other diarists, including Marianne Fortescue, record the titles of novels they read, we are not treated to such details for Lecky. Haslett, Moyra. "'For the Improvement and Amusement of Young Ladies": Elizabeth Carter and the Bluestockings in Ireland.' *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 33 (2018) 33-60.

²⁰ Smollett, Tobias. *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (ed.), Lewis M. Knapp. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2009 (258). Subsequent quotations are to this edition, cited in parentheses within the text.

²¹ Berndt, Thomas J. 'The features and Effects of Friendship in Early Adolescence.' *Child Development* 53:6 (1982) 1447-1460.

²² The event described thus by Lydia: 'some of us narrowly escaped with life – My uncle had well nigh perished...' (334).

²³ Lecky travels from Parkgate Harbour to Bath via Neston, Cheshire, Chester, Derbyshire, Wrexham, Marchwell, Ellsemere, Burlton, Shrewsbury, Hatchway, Coalbrookdale, Bridge North, Kidderminster, Worcester, and Gloucester.

²⁴ Graham, John. *A History of the Siege of Londonderry and Defence of Enniskillen, in 1688*. Dublin, 1829 (21; 29).

²⁵ Mac Suibhne, Breandán. 'Spirit, Spectre, Shade.' *Field Day Review* 9 (2013) 178.

²⁶ Fleming, N. C. *Ireland and Anglo-Irish Relations since 1800: Critical Essays*, vol. 1. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008.

²⁷ See also Higgins, Padhraig. *A Nation of Politicians. Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2010.

²⁸ The diarist recognises the symbolism of the harp too on another occasion and declares, 'to be sure if I was worth £20,000 I'd learn to play on the harp & buy a very good one'.

²⁹ Botonaki, Effie. 'Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries: Self-Examination, Covenanting, and Account Keeping.' *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30:1 (1999) 3-21. Manuals for self-examination abounded in the seventeenth century, supplementing sermons encouraging this practice, and although much of this self-reflection was not intended to be written down, spiritual diaries became increasingly popular as diarists sought to keep a physical account of their days. Ryrie (298-314).

³⁰ While Charity Lecky's diary attests to this movement from a spiritual to a secular introspection, her diary also bears some echoes of the more religious emphases of previous diaries and displays marks of regret at her lapses and spiritual shortcomings during her travels, for example: 'when I heard many instances of poor illiterate people when they had gained a little knowledge of the scripture turning out so well... I looking into myself with shame & confusion... & yet what a sinner I am... may god pardon & give me grace to amend in future' (15-11-1796). Her attendance at a variety of churches does mark a pan-Protestantism, with her mentioning of Anabaptist, with hymns, long extempore prayer, songs and sermons; 'a decenting Chapel' where the sermon had but one flaw, 'that it was an hour & ten minutes long'; and on another occasion she mentions 'the first strange Church I received the Sacrament in.'

³¹ Lindfield, Peter, and Christie Margrave (eds.), *Rule Britannia? Britain and Britishness 1707–1901*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015 (xvii).

³² Borsay, Peter. 'Children, Adolescents, and Fashionable Urban Society in Eighteenth-Century England.' In: Anja Müller (ed.), *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.

³³ Edgeworth, Maria. *Belinda* (ed.) Kathryn Kirkpatrick. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2009.

³⁴ Chilton, Leslie A. 'Two Singularly Moral Works: Fenelon's *The Adventure of Telemachus* and Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*.' In: Peggy Thompson (ed.), *Beyond Sense and Sensibility: Moral Formation and the Literary Imagination*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2004 (79-90); Smollett, Tobias. *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (ed.) Thomas R. Preston, U of Georgia Press, 1991.

³⁵ See also (13-2-1797).

³⁶ This is reminiscent of Lydia's description of herself as 'a country hoydon' despite six hours with the hairdresser (94).

³⁷ 'my poor dress not looking fashionable' (7-11-1796).

³⁸ '[Mr Casin] said he had been introduced to so many Ladys he did not remember their names, he begged the favour of mine, blushing up to the eyes... in the course of the conversation I said where my mother & I was to spend the Day, why said he, have you a mother with you - what he had taken me for I don't know'.

³⁹ See also, Leanne Calvert on the role of sex and sexual activity in courtship, "'He came to her bed pretending courtship": sex, courtship and the making of marriage in Ulster, 1750–1844.' *Irish Historical Studies* (2018) 244-264, and Mary O'Dowd, 2018 (58-60).

⁴⁰ It is difficult to establish patterns regarding the marriage wishes of young Irish women, and their preference for certain nationalities. A trend in research amongst Irish historians had been a concentration on the inverse, that is on the abduction of women. For example, Kelly, James. 'The Abduction of Women of Fortune in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland* 9 (1994) 7-43; Barnard, Toby. *The abduction of a Limerick heiress*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998; and Malcolmson, Anthony. *The Pursuit of the Heiress, Aristocratic Marriage in Ireland, 1750–1820*. Ulster Historical Foundation, 1982. Beyond this, much of the work that had been done on marriage in an Irish context focused heavily on demography, and a post-Famine context. However, a cluster of more recent works have been emerging that do consider marriage conditions within eighteenth-century Ireland, including work already cited by Leanne Calvert; Wilson, Rachel. *Elite Women in Ascendancy Ireland*. Boydell, 2015; Wilson, Deborah. *Women, marriage and property in wealthy landed families in Ireland, 1750–1850*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009; and most recently, Luddy, Maria, and Mary O'Dowd (eds.), *Marriage in Ireland 1660-1925*. Cambridge: CUP, 2020.

⁴¹ Peter Borsay also comments that 'the Irish were a particularly numerous and influential element in Bath'. Borsay, Peter. 'Georgian Bath; a transnational culture.' In: Borsay, Peter and Jan Hein Furnée (eds.), *Leisure Cultures in Urban Europe c. 1700–1870: A Transnational Perspective*. Manchester: MUP, 2015 (93-116).

⁴² Opie, Amelia. *Adeline Mowbray*. Shelly King and John Pierce (eds.) Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1999 (26-27).

⁴³ Prendergast, Amy. 'Elizabeth Griffith, translation, transmission, and cultural transfer,' *Women's Writing* 27:2 (2020) 184-202.

⁴⁴ Trench, Melesina Chenevix St George. *The Remains of the Late Mrs. Richard Trench. Being Selections from her Journals, Letters, & Other Papers*. Dean of Westminster. (ed.) London, 1862 (98).

⁴⁵ Trench, Melesina. 1862 (51). See also examples on (38; 42; 54; 55; 86). It is Englishness rather than Britishness that is highlighted throughout, with the first reference to Britishness not arising until 1817, simply in reference to the heiress of the British Empire, with the following, in 1820, lauding the successes of a show that was 'all that Oriental pomp, feudal ceremonial, and British wealth could unite', Trench, Melesina, 1862 (451).

⁴⁶ Ó Gallchoir, Cliona. *Maria Edgeworth: Women, Enlightenment and Nation*. Dublin: UCD Press 2005.

⁴⁷ 5 January 1790, Sheridan, Elizabeth. *Betsy Sheridan's Journal*. William Le Fanu (ed.) Oxford: OUP, 1986. (192). The German Frederick Kielmansegge also notes this tendency of the Irish during his 1761 visit to Bath: 'they are aided by their French, which they speak more frequently and better than most Englishmen.'

Kielmansegge, *Diary of a Journey to England*, cited in Borsay, Peter, 2015 (110).

⁴⁸ Caulfield, James, Lord Charlemont, *The Manuscripts and Correspondence of James, first Earl of Charlemont*,

vol. 1: 1745–1783. London: Historical Manuscripts Commission, 1891 (14).

⁴⁹ Leerssen, Joep. *Mere Irish and Fior-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, Its Development, and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986; Prendergast, Amy

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⁵⁰ Equally, one finds examples where Lecky reflects on her disappointments at the behaviour of some Irish people, for example, '[at tea] a great number of young people & such a riotous set I had not before seen in England, & hardly so in Ireland, but, alas, they were all Irish.' (23-1-1797).

⁵¹ Sheridan, Elizabeth, 1960 (47).

⁵² Mr Lion, from Queen's County, 'talked politics at a great rate' (7-1-1797).

⁵³ Douglas, Aileen. *Uneasy Sensations: Smollett and the Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. (170).

⁵⁴ Lydia also notes the dismissive attitude paid to young women, but Smollett instead places men as the victims of cunning females with her assertion that, 'We complain of advantages which the men take of our youth, inexperience, sensibility, and all that, but I have seen enough to believe, that our sex in general make it their business to ensnare the other...' (259).

⁵⁵ Wood, John. (413)

⁵⁶ Other diarists approach those of that religion from an entirely different position to either Lecky or Lady Moira, and often with significantly less sympathy. Fortescue's processes of identification are negotiated in relation to her construction of herself in opposition to those in her surrounding community within Ireland. This

is particularly apparent in her emphasis on pronouns of inclusion and exclusion during the 1798 rebellion. A binary of us and them is in evidence throughout her recordings of the event, for example, ‘We are still thank God conquering the rebels’; ‘the Rebels have been defeated at two battles, one at Kilbeggan, the other at Ovidstown Hill. They lost more than 300 & 30 men, our loss don’t exceed 23’ (20-6-1798). Most of those people in her immediate environs are entirely divorced from her lexicon of community and instead become a dangerous other against which to define herself, her family, and those who fit into her wider sense of a communal Protestant identity.

⁵⁷ Rawdon, Elizabeth. Undated letter from c.1783. Granard Papers, Castle Forbes, Co. Longford, T3765/M/3/14/16.

⁵⁸ Eger, Elizabeth, Charlotte Grant, Cliona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton, eds. *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700–1830*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2001.