Female Activists

Irish Women and Change 1900-1960

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Editors

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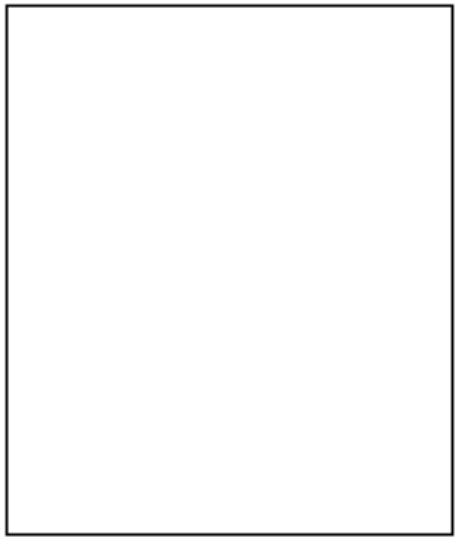
Rosamond Jacob (1888–1960)

Damian Doyle

> All my life I have had a 'complex' against self-constituted authority or assumptions of superior dignity. I hate it in the male sex, in Churches, in humanity as opposed to animals, in aristocracy, in empires, in white people, in everything relating to social ideas of class.
>
> *Rosamond Jacob*[1]



Rosamond Jacob, known to her friends and family as Rose, was born in Waterford on October 13, 1888, the third child of Henrietta and Louis Jacob. Her sister, Betty, died at age five and Rose and her brother, Tom, born in 1885, were taught by Maria Walpole, a friend of the family, who lived next door to their home on Newton Hill, Waterford. At the age of ten she went to the preparatory class at Newtown School, the Quaker school in Waterford. She was miserable there, being constantly teased by her peers who considered her mollycoddled. After a year she resumed home schooling with a daily governess, and later from 1902 to 1906, learned French and German at the Protestant girls' high school.[2]

Jacob's parents defied the mould of the middle-class Protestant community of Waterford. They were agnostic (though perceived as atheists), anti-British, and socialised little beyond immediate family. Both came from large families. Henrietta Harvey (1849–1919), Rose's mother, was one of five daughters and

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[1] Rosamond Jacob, unpublished, incomplete autobiography. This and other manuscripts on which I have drawn for Jacob's early life are from the private collection of Rosamond's niece, Mrs. Margaret Shanahan, who kindly allowed me access to the collection. (Hereafter, Shanahan Papers). I am extremely grateful to Margaret for her hospitality, warmth and encouragement on the writing of her aunt's story.

[2] *Ibid.*

three sons of Elizabeth Waring and Thomas Smith Harvey who lived just outside Waterford. Henrietta's father was an orthodox religious Friend. Her mother became an agnostic and her eight children followed. Rose's father, Louis Jacob (1841-1907), was one of twelve in an orthodox Quaker family in Clonmel. He met Henrietta through his sister Huldah, who was married to Henrietta's brother, and they married in 1887. Louis Jacob, and his son Tom after him, worked for Henrietta's brother's and father's house-agency and stock-broking firm in Waterford.

Her father was a major influence in Jacob's life. In her unpublished 'Recollections of Louis Jacob' she writes that he was

> more unique than any other character I have known . . . fundamentally he was like no one else . . . He had two gods, beauty and justice. He was interested in politics because he wished that justice should be done . . . All his life he spent his spare time drawing, modelling, painting in water-colours. . . . The pursuit of art was his conception of the most desirable and absorbing activity known to man.[3]

He had two main objections to religion: one was to the Bible, the other was to the lives and deeds of people who professed orthodox Christianity, but did not practice it. He could not respect an orthodox Christianity that supported the British Empire with its greed and cruelty, or a God who ordered the animal creation to be subject to, and in dread of, humans.

Though the parents remained friendly with many of the Quakers in Waterford, their agnosticism led to 'a kind of isolation', while their support for Irish nationalism was 'obnoxious to most Protestants.' At the international level, they sympathised with and supported all oppressed peoples. Her mother worked on the committees of the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, with Jacob later taking her place in this work. Her father never became involved with any clubs or organisations.

In her autobiography, Jacob explains that she 'was reared among middle-aged people with unorthodox minds and artistic and intellectual interests, and [that she] always felt both superior to the children at school and afraid of them.' She was not good at school except for literature and history. She was particularly fond of Irish history and biographies of people like Joan of Arc who fired her imagination. Standish O'Grady's books on Cuchulainn and the Fianna gave her a familiarity with Irish legend and folklore, themes Jacob would return to in her writing near the end of her life. When she was fifteen she began reading books on the United Irishmen, Moore's *Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* and Theobald Wolfe Tone's *Autobiography*, and developed an interest which, more than three decades later, would culminate in her history, *The Rise of the United Irishmen*

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[3] Shanahan Papers.

1791-1794. In literature, her major influences were Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. In her early years as a suffragist her political influences included Anna Haslam, a Quaker and founder of one of the first Irish suffrage societies in 1876,[4] and the nineteenth-century U.S. feminists, Lucretia Mott and Amelia Bloomer.

Jacob became active in the cultural and political movements in Ireland in the 1890s. She was a member of both the Gaelic League (founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde) and Inghinidhe na hÉireann[5] (Daughters of Ireland), a nationalist women's organisation founded in 1900. She and her brother Tom were members of the National League, which emerged after Parnell and Davitt disbanded the Land League. In 1906 both were founding members of Waterford's Sinn Féin Club and canvassed for the first Sinn Féin candidate to run for Waterford corporation. In the same year she began learning Irish and spent one month of the next two summers taking Irish at Ring, County Waterford. She was a keen Irish dancer, sought after to teach other students different steps. Though she struggled with the language in the beginning, she was able to speak and write Irish for the rest of her life.

As a member of the Gaelic League Jacob took Irish language classes, was involved in local Gaelic League meetings, and often travelled to Dublin to hear Douglas Hyde and others speak. The League's cultural confines were a limitation in Jacob's view and her wish to see it actively political is evident in her 1908 proposal, 'Should the Gaelic League become Political?' which won the nomination for a debate at one of the League's Waterford meetings. She was also particularly interested in the teaching of Irish history and the use of Irish in the public schools.

In rural areas, often predominantly Catholic, her feminist consciousness and unorthodox religious beliefs contrasted sharply with the ideas of the members of the organisations to which she belonged. It was within the Gaelic League that she 'discovered the docility of Catholics to their clergy and the clergy's determination to control them in all departments of life.' Her frustration emerges in a diary entry where an upcoming céilí is discussed at a meeting:

> A lot of them wanted to have it here in the rooms, so that was settled apparently, and then they got cutting up rough about the foreign dancing. I defended it as well as I could but they were nearly all against me, & I never heard Fr. Ormonde talk so much nonsense in a given time before. He said round dances were strictly barred by the church and that they were immoral, & against the

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[4] See Mary Cullen, 'Anna Maria Haslam', in Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy (eds.), *Women, Power and Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Eight Biographical Studies* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 161-196.

[5] See Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London, 1983), pp. 40-87.

> 6th & 9th commandments, 'or what *you* call the 7th and 10th' (this to me) and to the best of my remembrance cast aspersions on every decent woman that dances them (the men don't matter half so much of course). . . Tom and Mr. O'Neill and I were the only ones that voted for the foreign dances.[6]

She also resented the closing down of W.P. Ryan's weekly, *The Irish Peasant*, in 1910, due to pressure from Cardinal Logue. According to Jacob it had offended him by treating the clergy as ordinary people with whom one could argue and disagree. In losing *The Irish Peasant* Ireland 'lost a splendid organ of civilised national thought and culture' and she noted in her autobiography:

> I became a bitter anti-cleric and freethinker. And my feelings as a woman helped in this; the male monopoly of the priesthood seemed to me an outrage on justice and made me hate the whole institution for its injustice as well as its tyranny, and I never to this day can see why other women do not feel this as I did.

One of Jacob's earliest political activities was in 1911 with Inghinidhe na hÉireann in Waterford. That year the King and Queen of England visited Dublin, and as the Queen's name was Mary, the authorities decided to have all the Marys of Ireland pay tribute through a collection of signatures to be presented to the royal couple. Inghinidhe na hÉireann circulated a repudiation of this to be signed by as many Irish Marys as possible. Going from house to house collecting names was a huge ordeal for Jacob whose shyness made opening the subject afresh to each woman simply agony.

During this time she was also involved with Friends' Relief, a Quaker group in Waterford. The work exposed her to the poverty in rural and urban Waterford and she was elected secretary of the Committee for Social Reform in Waterford City. The committee addressed issues such as gambling in the streets and drinking, which they believed contributed to the poverty of women and children. Members interviewed priests and police in the city, and visited families in the slums to recommend them for relief programs. Her writings show that Rose was sensitive to her class position and critical of the patronising approach of some members of the committee.

Jacob had been visiting Dublin each summer after her father's death in 1907, staying with Josephine and Emily Webb, close friends of her Aunt Hannah. From 1912 to 1919 she travelled to Dublin more regularly, especially for suffrage and Gaelic League meetings and lectures, while remaining in Waterford to care for her semi-invalid mother. She speaks of these visits as highlights in her life, allowing her to make friends with other suffragists and solidifying personal

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[6] Rosamond Jacob, Diaries, 13 May 1907, Ms 32,582 (14), Jacob Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin. (Hereafter, Jacob Diaries).

relationships. The most notable was with Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, whom she first met in 1913 and who became a lifelong friend. Her antagonism towards the church was augmented through her campaigning as a suffragist. After she had read a pamphlet on the position of women by Father Kane she noted, '[h]e gets a bit mixed towards the end . . . but the upshot is that women should have the vote but no more than that, and should be always subordinate to men. It is a deplorable thing to have such a pamphlet circulating with divine authority about the country, but that's what comes of Christianity.'[7]

Jacob became a member of both the Irishwomen's Franchise League (IWFL), founded in 1908 by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Margaret Cousins as the first Irish suffrage society prepared to use militant tactics,[8] and of Cumann na mBan, founded in 1914 as a women's auxiliary to the Irish Volunteers,[9] and contributed to the suffrage-first versus nation-first debate among nationalist feminists. In a letter to the suffrage newspaper, the *Irish Citizen*, in 1914 she wrote:

> It has been said, in justification of the *Irish Citizen*'s present policy, that there can be no free nation without free women. This is true in one sense, but the term 'a free nation' may be used in two different senses, either to express a nation of free citizens, or a nation free from foreign control; and a nation must be free in the latter sense before it can be free in the former. Political rights conferred on Irishwomen by a foreign government would be a miserable substitute for the same rights won, even three years later, from our own legislative assembly. The *Irish Citizen* has two theories on this subject, to which it clings with dogged persistence. One is that every nationalist is an obedient follower of Mr. Redmond; and the other is, that so long as women have no votes, they have no duty to their country. The *Irish Citizen*'s idea of public duty is that we nationalists should abandon for an indefinite time, and even oppose, the cause of national liberty for the chance of getting the vote a few years earlier than we might otherwise get it. The woman who does this is a true suffragist, no doubt, but no one can call her a nationalist.
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> I suppose no self-respecting woman will deny that the members of Cumann na mBan . . . will be much to blame if they do not insist on their organisation being represented on the Volunteers executive, and that all possible pressure should be brought to bear on them to do so. But I do not think any nationalist woman can be blamed for preferring the work of providing rifles for the volunteers to being instructed, by Mrs Pethick-Lawrence or any other Englishwoman, as to the ideals of nationalism for which she should strive.[10]

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[7] *Ibid.*, 8 July 1913, Ms 32,582 (25).

[8] See Rosemary Cullen Owens, *Smashing Times: A History of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement 1889-1922* (Dublin, 1984).

[9] Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, pp. 88-247.

[10] Rosamond Jacob, 'Letter', *Irish Citizen*, 30 May 1914. Quoted in Margaret Ward, *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 42-3.

While she criticised the *Irish Citizen* for seeing 'every nationalist as an obedient follower of Mr. Redmond', the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, she insisted that 'Cumann na mBan . . . will be much to blame if they do not insist on their organisation being represented on the Volunteers executive', arguing that Cumann na mBan needed the same autonomy that Inghinidhe na hÉireann enjoyed and must share decision making at the highest level of the Volunteers.

In 1914 John Redmond insisted on naming twenty-five of his own nominees to the Irish Volunteers' Provisional Committee. Because Redmond had refused to include the women's vote in his Home Rule Bill, the IWFL urged Cumann na mBan 'to declare their absolute opposition to this agreement on the grounds that Redmond . . . forfeited any right to have an organisation of women working on his behalf.' When Cumann na mBan failed to respond, the IWFL deplored 'the silent acquiescence of the executive.'[11] Jacob was opposed to Irish soldiers fighting for England and actively demonstrated against Redmond's campaign in 1914 to recruit Irish Volunteers into the British Army. At a recruiting rally in Wexford Jacob was removed from the platform where she displayed a suffragist poster opposing the war. She was also strongly opposed to World War I, regarding it as an imperialist war, unopposed by the Church, and fought for the benefit of a patriarchal system. In December 1914 she wrote that 'all the Great powers were to blame, Germany not the least, that it is an eloquent testimony to the utter failure of any system of religion or morals to civilise the human race, and a melancholy example of masculine government.'[12]

Many of the issues Jacob was involved with surfaced in her first novel, *Callaghan*, written in 1915 and dealing with the period 1912-14. Its central focus is the relationship between Frances Morrin, a Protestant suffragist and Aloysius Callaghan, a Catholic landlord and nationalist who joins the Irish Volunteers and opposes Redmond's strategy of supporting Britain in the war. Callaghan assumes that Frances will give up her work after their marriage, but is forced to grapple with the concept that 'a woman might have public duties which seemed to her so [*sic*] important as a man's.'[13] The novel also deals with several of the other conflicts within Irish life at the time: the suffragists' campaign for the vote; the involvement of the Irish Volunteers in the world war and the resistance to British recruitment in Ireland; and public reaction to Protestants marrying Catholics. The novel ends in an atmosphere of destruction, despair and chaos, reflecting the turbulence in the lives of those living through the period, particularly those who chose to be political. *Callaghan* did not find a publisher until late 1920. Both its contemporary political content and Jacob's location in Waterford may have contributed to the delay.

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[11] Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 100.

[12] Jacob Diaries, 31 Dec 1914, Ms 32,582 (27).

[13] Rosamond Jacob, *Callaghan* (published under the pseudonym F. Winthrop) (Dublin, 1920), p. 174.

In 1917 she was chosen to represent Waterford as a delegate at the Sinn Féin Convention[14] where she won a commitment to women's suffrage.[15] She had asked Arthur Griffith on what franchise would the future Constituent Assembly be elected, and 'Griffith answered plainly that whatever the franchise was, it would include them, which is the straightest statement he has ever made on the point.'[16] Before the convention Jacob and other women members had discussed the need that the Convention 'should declare unmistakably for a republic, and the danger of Griffith's non-republicanism and autocratic spirit: and the extreme trouble they had in forcing six women onto the executive against the will of Griffith and Milroy etc.'[17] For Jacob and others a 'republic' meant one based on the French and American democratic models rather than Griffith's aim of home rule under a monarchist constitution. During the convention Countess Plunkett, wife of Count George Plunkett, the first Sinn Féin candidate elected in 1917, and mother of the executed 1916 rebel, Joseph Plunkett, hosted a reception at her home for the women delegates which aimed

> to link up all the women in Sinn Féin clubs and encourage them to be active and educate themselves and take part in all political life of their districts – and to link up other women's organisations too and encourage all to do Feminist work together.[18]

During the 1918 elections Jacob canvassed for de Valera in the Waterford area, but was particularly interested in Sinn Féin women candidates as she wrote to Hanna Sheehy Skeffington:

> I hope I'll see your name in the list of candidates . . . I hope the Dublin women at least are stirring themselves to get women candidates selected – women in most other parts of the country are too scattered to do much. . . It seems to me the important thing for Irish suffragists to be doing at present. I hope they won't try to run women as independent candidates. . . That would be hopeless everywhere, I should think, and would give the impression that they didn't care about the national issue.[19]

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[14] The annual meeting of the Sinn Féin Party. This convention was held after the release of the 1916 prisoners and saw de Valera's election to the presidency of Sinn Féin.

[15] Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 126.

[16] Jacob Diaries, 25 October 1917, Ms 32,582 (32).

[17] *Ibid.*, 1 October 1917, Ms 32,582 (32).

[18] *Ibid.*, 26 October 1917, Ms 32,582 (32).

[19] Sheehy Skeffington Papers, Ms 24,108, National Library of Ireland, Dublin. Quoted in Ward, *In Their Own Voice*, p. 81.

However, by the following year Jacob and Sheehy Skeffington were concerned at 'the lack of feminism among Sinn Féin women in the provinces.'[20] And by the time the first Irish Dáil met in 1919 Jacob had 'lost a great deal of interest in it on account of there being no women in it, and couldn't respect it very much either, for the same reason.'[21] From this point on, Jacob's political energies increasingly turned to issues that were ignored by the nationalist momentum sweeping the country. The following lengthy, but telling, quote gives her analysis of the historical and psychological impact of colonialism and of the love colonised nations can develop for authority and censorship:

> All nations are subject to this desire to enforce the will of the majority without regard to individual rights, and those who are not troubled with foreign interference have less excuse than we for yielding to it. But the less liberty we allow each other now, the more will habits of persecution and mental and moral slavery flourish among us after foreign incubus is removed. . .
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> In a nation situated like Ireland, which can only avoid national extinction by maintaining a perpetual state of defensive resistance against the efforts to absorb her of the stronger state who claims authority over her, one of the dangers most difficult to guard against is the lowering of the value set upon individual liberty. . .
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> The network of British prohibitions and permissions which surrounds us seems to breed in us not a dislike to the whole troublesome insulting tyrannous spirit of the thing, but a desire to set up a similar system of prohibitions and permissions of our own. We must have our own permits, our own censors. In spite of – or perhaps because of – our perpetual fight for national freedom, the principle of authority has ten times more weight with us than the principle of liberty. We love authority. We don't feel comfortable except when we are told by our own native authorities what we may do and what we may not, what cinema pictures we may see, what Sunday papers we may read, what dances we may dance, what men we may speak to. It is one of the evils of foreign domination that by the state of war which it occasions, it strengthens the natural learning towards authority and mass action, and weakens its victim's sense of the importance of individual liberty. We find that nothing can be done without union, we must act together; and to ensure this a certain compulsion – of 'pressure' – seems necessary. Evil breeds evil, necessitates evil.[22]

In 1920, one year after her mother's death, Jacob moved to Dublin. For the first year she lodged with Hanna Sheehy Skeffington in Rathmines, strengthening

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[20] Jacob Diaries, 30 August 1918, Ms 32,582 (34).

[21] *Ibid.*, 21 January 1919, Ms 32,582 (35).

[22] Excerpt from an article 'Individual liberty' by Jacob written in 1920 for *An Gabail Timpal*, hand-written on piece of paper inserted in diary, Jacob Diaries, Ms 32, 582 (37).

their relationship, and growing extremely fond of Hanna's eleven-year-old son, Owen. She had been strongly influenced by both Frank and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington's work with the *Irish Citizen*, to which she herself regularly contributed. In addition to friendship Hanna provided an intellectual engagement which Jacob valued. Both were committed feminists, republican-nationalists, activists and writers who regularly consulted each other on current issues, often reading drafts of each other's writing or letters to the press.

Once in Dublin, she began to actively seek a publisher for *Callaghan* and by March she got her first refusal from Maunsell's, remarking in her diary, 'I wish they would give some idea of why they refused it.' By September of 1920 Martin Lester had accepted the novel though they insisted that Jacob remove 'most of the suffrage lecture.'[23]

Jacob's move to Dublin also led to her increased activity in the Irishwomen's International League (IIL), founded in 1916 as the Irish branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).[24] She had become involved in the League when living in Waterford. In 1920 she was made secretary, a position she held for much of the following decade. In the summer of 1921 Lucy Kingston and Jacob were the Irish delegates to the WILPF conference in Vienna. While they were in Vienna, the truce in the War of Independence came into force on 11 July and was followed by negotiations between the British government and Sinn Féin.

Jacob, like many republicans, opposed the Treaty that was signed in December and accepted by a Dáil majority in January 1922. She regarded dominion status and the oath of allegiance to the crown required of Dáil deputies as a betrayal of the republic ratified by Dáil Éireann in 1919, and wrote in her autobiography: 'I had felt how wrong it was to have no women among the delegates, and felt then that, had there been even one woman, that treaty would never have been signed.' However, her friends and colleagues were thoroughly divided on the issue. Many members of IIL, including Lucy Kingston, supported the Treaty. So did her brother Tom and, from then on, they differed a good deal on political issues.

The civil war followed. On the morning of 28 June 1922, after hearing 'ferocious firing all the latter part of the night, close by apparently', Rose found on buying a newspaper 'that the Free State Army was attacking the Four Courts.' She went down to the quays 'to look, and stood a while with a crowd at the corner of Parliament St. listening to the big guns and watching the dome of the

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[23] Jacob Diaries, 23 September 1920, Ms 32,582 (37).

[24] The International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace was founded in 1915 and in 1919 renamed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). See Rosemary Cullen Owens, 'Women and pacifism in Ireland 1915-1932' in Maryann Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd (eds.), *Women and Irish History* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 220-38.

Four Courts in a senseless sort of way . . . I went most of the afternoon wandering around High St, Bridge St etc. from a diseased spirit of curiosity.'[25] Within two days she had made inquiries about the Red Cross and 'found a Trade Union place called Tara Hall, full of girls making bandages. They showed me how and I worked there til dinnertime.'[26]

Jacob was part of the women's delegation organised by Maud Gonne, which attempted to negotiate peace between the Republicans and the Free State at the outbreak of hostilities. The women met on 1 July 1922 at the Mansion House, three days after the bombing of the Four Courts:

> Then the more or less Free State women; Mrs Despard, M. McBride, Agnes O'Farrelly, Edith Webb, and L. Bennett as a neutral went to interview the government and came back reporting as follows – they spoke of the suffering of the people and the need for peace and got the usual sort of answers from Griffith, Collins and Cosgrave. Cosgrave seemed anxious for the Dáil to meet and said it could be summoned for Tuesday, but Griffith nudged him to make him shut up. Miss Bennett and M. McB asked if they would let the Republicans evacuate without giving up their arms – Griffith said no, they must give up their arms. Mme Mc Bride said that they certainly would not do, and that it would be better to let them go with their arms than to shell the city. They were firm on this (though Collins said he didn't know why the republicans didn't go home with their arms now, as there seemed nothing to stop them) and Griffith said the lives of all the ministers were in the greatest danger. . .
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> It didn't seem much use sending a deputation to the republicans, but Miss Bennett said it would be very unfair not to – should at least show them there were some republican women who wanted peace, and not put all the burden of guilt on the government – so Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, Mrs. Connery, Mrs Johnson, Miss Bennett and I went.[27]

In late December of the following year, Jacob would find herself imprisoned by the new Free State government. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington departed on a republican lecture tour, and asked Jacob to stay at her house and take care of Owen. Hanna had given her leave to shelter any IRA members who asked and Jacob lent a room to some republican typists. Just after Christmas the house was raided by Free State detectives who discovered republican publications. Jacob was arrested and brought to Mountjoy prison, where she shared a cell with Dorothy Macardle, the republican writer and friend of de Valera. In prison Jacob's main fears were of being kept there indefinitely and of being expected to go on hunger strike if some serious grievance turned up. After a month of

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[25] Jacob Diaries, 28 June 1922, Ms 32,582 (41).
[26] *Ibid.*, 30 June 1922, Ms 32,582 (41).
[27] Jacob Diaries, 1 July 1922, Ms 32, 582 (41).

incarceration, a petition signed by over forty relatives and friends obtained her release.

Jacob's arrest was undoubtedly an embarrassment to WILPF, which felt compromised to have its honorary secretary imprisoned because of her alleged association with the republican army.[28] Nevertheless, Jacob and other republican women continued to campaign for better conditions for the republican prisoners in jails and internment camps throughout the Civil War (1922-23) and until their release in 1924. In the late spring of 1923 Dorothy Macardle and the other republican women were released. Jacob and Macardle became close friends, sharing a flat in Rathmines in the later years of the decade.

The same issues that consumed Jacob's political activism continually surfaced in her fiction. *The Troubled House* was written in the early 1920s but not published until 1938. Set in 1920 during the War of Independence the novel explores a number of themes through the eyes of the narrator, Margaret Cullen. One is the sacrifice of a woman's identity to that of the men in her family:

> What a queer thing it was that my life should be spent thus, almost entirely in love and care and fear and thought and anxiety over three men and a boy. Was I nothing but a being relative to them without real existence of my own? Each one of them led his own life, had his centre in his own soul, as a human creature should, but I had no purpose or driving force in myself: nothing that was independent of them.[29]

This theme is juxtaposed to the less constrained lives and strongly suggested lesbian relationship of two artists, Josephine and Nix, whose lives intersect those of the Cullens. Debates about the merits of pacifism versus physical force pervade the book. Conflict develops around the solicitor father's 'worldly prudence', the IRA activism of one son, Liam, the pacifism of the eldest son, Theo, and the hero-worship of Liam by the fourteen-year old Roddy who runs messages for the IRA, all observed through the eyes of their mother, who acts as mediator and negotiator.

The plot centres around the Croke Park killings by the British forces on 21 November 1921, a reprisal for the previous night's killing of eleven undercover British agents. By choosing to harbour Liam (on the run after assassinating a British undercover officer) Nix and Josephine have their studio raided and their art destroyed. Theo is involved in an IRA ambush when Liam is ill, and the Cullen home is raided by the Black and Tans who beat Theo in front of his mother and Roddy. At the end of the novel Liam accidentally kills his father in an ambush on the British army. This act of patricide suggests the removal of the old establishment – the colonial servants, represented by the father and his

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[28] See, Cullen Owens, 'Women and pacifism in Ireland'.

[29] Rosamond Jacob, *The Troubled House* (Dublin, 1938), p. 45.

established law practice – to make way for the emergence of a new nation. Throughout the book troops patrol constantly; people live in fear, and life is disrupted by curfews and raids. Without either glorifying or condemning war, Jacob calls into question its very nature, the killing of other human beings. On another scale, she examines the emotional and psychological impact of war on the individual, the family and society. It seems likely that the realistic portrayal of the period and its volatile material delayed publication of *The Troubled House* until 1938 after the success of her history, *The Rise of the United Irishmen*.

As the Free State became more conservative and insular in its policies during the 1920s, Jacob and others began looking to Europe and beyond. In 1926, as honorary secretary of WILPF, Jacob was among the organisers of its International Congress held in Dublin. As one of the few republicans within WILPF, and conscious of the politicisation of the congress, she attempted to use her influence to see what benefit the republicans could gain from it. She even met de Valera to discuss the possibilities, but did not feel the meeting achieved much.[30]

At the congress's Minority commission, Jacob presented the Irish Minority Report and expanded on the oath of allegiance to the crown of England taken by Irish Dáil deputies under the 1922 Treaty. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington 'made an excellent *resumé* of British Imperialism in Ireland, past and present' to the Imperialism commission though Jacob noted that 'many of our own committee would have highly disapproved.'[31] Many of the Irish members of WILPF disagreed with Jacob's and Sheehy Skeffington's view that Ireland's dominion status and the oath of allegiance made the Treaty unacceptable.[32] In a later diary entry for the same congress Jacob notes, '[I]mportant resolutions and such all this morning, interesting to see how it was the republicans only in the Irish delegation who voted for anything advanced, such as a resolution against special legislation for the "protection" of women in industry [and] resolutions against colonisation etc.'[33]

In April of 1926 Jacob resigned from the Sinn Féin party, just weeks after the Ard Fheis at which de Valera resigned. She later joined Fianna Fáil, the new party which de Valera established to enter the Dáil and overturn the Treaty by constitutional means. In May of 1927 she was appointed official secretary of the Gaelic League. She resigned the WILPF secretaryship, finding both positions too much work. However, she continued to spend much of her energy in WILPF and, in 1929, she and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington represented Ireland at the WILPF congress in Prague. These conferences allowed Jacob to meet and interact with women of different nationalities and ethnicities. She was particularly concerned with the conditions of women workers in industrialised nations and

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[30] Jacob Diaries, 28 January 1926, Ms 32,582 (51).
[31] *Ibid.*, 10 July 1926, Ms 32,582 (53).
[32] See Cullen Owens, 'Women and pacifism in Ireland'.
[33] Jacob Diaries, 15 July 1926, Ms 32,582 (53).

the autonomy of small industrial nations in the face of rising imperialism across the globe. At the same time she continued to work for women's rights in the new Free State. In this context an ongoing issue for Jacob throughout the 1920s was the government efforts to remove women from jury service,[34] especially in cases of sex offences. By 1928 she writes that the '[w]hole jury panel for Dublin called – not one woman on it.'[35] She was a member of the Irish Women Citizens' and Local Government Association (IWCLGA),[36] one of the main feminist pressure groups keeping a close eye on legislation affecting women as citizens in the Free State. Strategies included writing 'to the Press, [lobbying] of the Oireachtas and circulating leaflets.'[37] But by 1936 the situation was no better. When a joint committee of women's organisations sought an audience with de Valera to discuss women police and women in the new constitution, Jacob recorded with irony 'how [de Valera] could receive no deputation – but he could receive the German footballers all right.'[38]

During the years 1928-36 Jacob's diary entries often mention depression. While reasons for the depression are not offered, it is not difficult to imagine her feeling marginalised as she saw the nation to which she had given over twenty years of campaigning for women's rights and independence moving towards a cultural ideology imbued with Catholicism in which women were expected to confine themselves to the home. On a personal level she was experiencing growing tension between herself and her immediate family and friends at home in Waterford, reflected in the following argument during a Christmas visit:

> Went back to the Limes and began talking of [Aunt] Maya – Tom started on how men can't stand her, and when I said it was partly their own fault, he rounded on me and told me I was like her and it was getting impossible to talk to me because of my anti-men obsession . . When I protested that everyone didn't see me like that, and that people in Dublin could get on with me all right and liked me. . . Tom I think said yes but what sort of people were they? It didn't occur to them that any of the wrongness might be on their side. . . [They] think I am wasting and fretting away my life among these intolerable Dublin people[39]

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[34] See Maryann Valiulis, 'Defining their role in the new state: Irishwomen's protest against the Juries Act of 1927', in *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, viii, 1, (July 1992), pp. 43-60.

[35] Jacob Diaries, 6 October 1928, Ms 32,582 (60).

[36] For more on this period (1922-1937) and the IWCLGA see Mary Clancy, 'Aspects of women's contribution to the Oireachtas debate in the Free State, 1922-1937', in Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy (eds.), *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th & 20th Centuries* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 206-232.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[38] Jacob Diaries, 29 October 1936, Ms 32,582 (80).

[39] *Ibid.*, 5 January 1927, Ms 32,582 (55).

However, despite these differences she remained extremely close to Tom and his wife, Dorothea, and continued to visit them in Waterford throughout her life.

Resistance to women's progress in society is the theme of Jacob's unpublished third novel, 'Third Person Singular'.[40] Written in the late 1920s and set between 1918-1920, it tackles the conventions surrounding marriage, adultery, love and friendship and a parochial versus cosmopolitan view on life and relationships. The protagonist, Violet, is married to Mr. Ambrose, who is domineering, arrogant, conceited and has little respect for his wife. When the unmarried Hugh MacNevin confesses his love for her, she reciprocates. Neither see what they are doing as immoral; rather, they argue it would be immoral if they were not true to themselves and allowed the pressure of family, friends and societal norms to override their decision to be together. Instead of the self-sacrificing Victorian style heroine who tells him she loves him but has to remain with the husband out of duty, Jacob's protagonist stays true to her instincts.

The 'third person singular' is Constance Moore, who also loves Hugh MacNevin. Constance is unorthodox in every sense of the word and not unlike Jacob. She is agnostic, seen as unfeminine, confrontational, speaks her mind, does not care for fashion and does not date men. She has been secretly in love with Hugh for six years. Instead of the two women competing for the man, Constance provides sanctuary to Violet at her cottage by the coast in Co. Waterford. The two women become close, and the refuge provides the space, conversation and support to return some individuality and identity to Violet.

Both *The Troubled House* and 'Third Person Singular' are women-centred and their protagonists speak their minds on topics such as sexuality, religion and ethics. In a very real sense these novels are a direct response to the emerging state. Under the restrictive conditions that followed the first Censorship of Publications Act in 1926, such a text as 'Third Person Singular' posed a direct affront to the 'revised' directive and morals of the Free State, which perhaps explains why the novel was never published. Three decades later, after Jacob's success with the historical fiction *The Rebel's Wife*, she revised 'Third Person Singular', yet failed again to find a publisher. Jacob's fears about the mindless following of authority, voiced in her earlier essay on 'Individual Liberty', appeared prophetic.

For Jacob and others the censorship act was a major step in the Free State's departure from the aspirations in the struggle for independence. During the divorce debates in 1928 she again noted her fear that the 'state is to be mentally governed by authority: any attack, for instance, on the institute of marriage, will be banned'[41] Both Lucy Kingston and Jacob felt that the Eucharistic

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[40] Rosamond Jacob, 'Third Person Singular' (unpublished manuscript). Jacob Papers, Ms 33,113.

[41] Jacob Diaries, 6 October 1928, Ms 32,582 (60).

Congress of 1932 marked the take-over of Catholic and conservative thinking in the Free State.[42] If 'Third Person Singular' can be regarded as Jacob's personal statement, she also let those in power know how she felt. In a letter to Frank Gallagher, who became the first editor of the *Irish Press* in 1931, regarding the proposed Censorship Bill of 1930, she explained: '[J]ust because I think the censorship bill so ridiculous, I would refrain from saying a word about it outside Ireland, because it's so humiliating that the world should learn that that is the sort of thing the Irish do when they get the power.'[43] And in a later letter she expanded:

> What I object to was simply the clear implication in the article that all the books censored were written for the sake of indecency. That is what seems to me so essentially unfair; that is the attitude that puts censorship people so in the wrong, and gives the impression that they are ignorant of what they are writing of.[44]

In 1929 Jacob formed a Protection Committee to 'investigate the arrest and continual re-arrest of certain republicans, but also for those republicans who were losing their jobs to employers and to send deputations to these employers.'[45] This was at the request of her friend Frank Ryan, whom she had met in 1926 in a Gaelic League Irish class taught by him. An I.R.A. member since he was sixteen, he had been in prison camps in 1923. When Rose met him he was a student at University College, Dublin, and one of the leaders of its republican element.

Jacob's politics also brought her into contact with activists around the world. In 1930, at the request of A.E. Russell,[46] Jacob was invited to become a member of the Dublin Committee of the One Hundred of the Threefold Movement – Union of East and West League of Neighbours Fellowship of Faith, which worked 'for the realization of peace and brotherhood – through understanding and neighbourliness – between people of ALL Nationalities, Races, Cultures, Classes, Conditions and Creeds.'[47] In 1930 after attending a lecture by Mr. Chakravarty of India on non-violence, she travelled to England with Lucy Kingston as WILPF representatives to interview Chakravarty and learn more about Gandhi's use of non-violence for political purposes. In 1932 Jacob was elected to the committee of the Indian-Irish Independence League. During

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[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Frank Gallagher Papers, Ms 18,353, National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Jacob Papers, Ms 33, 230.

[46] A. E. (George) Russell was a central figure of the Irish Literary Revival, which included Douglas Hyde, W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge, among others.

[47] Jacob Diaries, 6 August 1930, Ms 32,582 (65).

this period she was involved with the International Disarmament Declaration Committee. The committee collected 6,000 signatures for total disarmament of all the military powers in the world, which was sent to a disarmament conference under the auspices of the League of Nations in 1932. They received support from Quaker meeting houses, and also by canvassing cinema queues, where on one occasion Jacob and Lucy Kingston 'toiled away for one and a half hours, and did well, getting ninety names on their disarmament petition.'[48] At Jacob's request the Committee also wrote a letter 'protesting against military show at the Eucharistic Congress.'[49]

In 1931, as an Irish delegate for the Friends of the Soviet Union (FOSU), Jacob travelled to the USSR at the invitation of the Central Trade Union Council of the Soviet Union. Her interest dated back to her participation in a famine relief fund for the USSR in Dublin in the early 1920s, and she was a longtime supporter of socialism and admirer of James Connolly. Of the original delegation of seven, only two succeeded in getting passports, the majority being refused 'on the grounds (given by the Minister of Justice) that they were not suitable people to be allowed visit the USSR.'[50] She travelled as a writer and journalist, accompanied by Meg Connery travelling as a working housewife. Meg Connery had been a member of the IWFL and WILPF, and also, with Louie Bennett, a key organizer of the Irish Women Workers Union. They sailed from London to Leningrad with the English FOSU delegates. The main issues Jacob wished to investigate were, 'the progress of women in the USSR, the every day home life of the workers and peasants, and the means by which religious tyranny has been overthrown.'[51] In a meeting with Soviet officials she inquired about the number of women in high positions, and was informed of women chairing 'The Union of Medical Health and Sanitary Works, the Textile Union and Commissar of Finance in the Russian Republic.'[52] As religious persecution was the chief issue in anti-Soviet propaganda in Ireland, she visited four churches within a mile of their hotel 'with services proceeding' and 'in the cathedral of the Redeemer, prelates in magnificent vestments were officiating before a considerable congregation.' She knew it was not possible in one month

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[48] Daisy Lawrence Swanton, *Emerging from the Shadow: the Lives of Sarah Anne Lawerenson and Lucy Olive Kingston, Based on Personal Diaries, 1883-1969* (Dublin, 1994), p. 122.

[49] Jacob Diaries, 24 March 1932, Ms 32,582 (69).

[50] *Ibid.*, 21 May 1931, Ms 32,582 (66). The diary entries and notes on her trip extending over a three-week period record observations contradicting traditional assumptions of the Soviet Union.

[51] Draft report of the Irish Friends of the Soviet Union (FOSU) delegation to the Soviet Union, May 21, 1931, Jacob Manuscripts, Ms 33,229. [Hereafter, Draft Report].

[52] Jacob Diaries, 23 May 1931, Ms 32,582 (66).

to see much of so vast a country or know first hand of conditions beyond what appeared on the surface. She thought the system of the Red Army 'extraordinarily wise and unmilitaristic; especially the attention paid to keeping the Red Army men in the closest touch with the life of the community, and the provision made for the exemption from military services of men with genuine religious convictions against war.'[53] The most spectacular event of the visit was the demonstrations at Revolutionary Square on 1 May. From a hotel balcony she 'watched for three hours, four processions at once converging on Red Square – no end of banners and slogans and caricatures of Popes and wreckers, capitalists and politicians, and the people walking so casually and so full of spontaneous enthusiasm – it was the most stunning evidence of popular feeling imaginable.'[54] When Jacob eventually joined in and walked through Red Square she noted there was 'not one woman in the government group on the Lenin tomb.' She believed 'that the new order [had] gone far to abolish poverty, that it [had] whole hearted support of the people, and that they [were] showing a degree of sanity in the work in building up a new civilisation which no other people [had] yet approached.'[55] In her end-of-year notes she recorded that she had given four lectures on Russia after her return, one with Connery at the Mansion House.

In 1935 Jacob and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington attempted unsuccessfully to form an anti-capital punishment group in Dublin. The Civil War had seen many executions of republicans by the Free State, leading to bitter divisions within the country. Jacob's thoughts on the subject of state-sanctioned killing are expressed in her essay, 'The right to kill', written as a reflection on seeing *Vigil* by A.R. Fanning at the Abbey Theatre, in which three prisoners of war, technically 'rebels', are captured by the government army. In the play a law has been passed 'that all prisoners taken in arms are to be shot.' To Jacob this law 'takes such murders entirely out of the realm of crime or violence, making them acts of loyal obedience to the state.' She argues that soldiers 'obeying orders from above', relinquishing them of personal responsibility is not morally justifiable.

> People may have to subordinate their judgement to that of the state, but must they subordinate their conscience? It is not quite the same thing. They may obey laws which they think are ill-contrived for securing their objects, but that is rather different from committing, in obedience to orders, acts which are in themselves obvious crimes. Murder, for instance. When authority commands the violation of all human and kindly feeling, authority ought to be left to do the job itself. Let legislators and judges who believe in capital

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[53] Draft Report.
[54] Jacob Diaries, 1 May 1931, Ms 32,582 (66).
[55] Draft Report.

> punishment be the hangmen, let military governments murder their rebel prisoners with their own hands, let ministers who decide on wars be deprived of all special protection, or better still, put in the most dangerous place that can be found.[56]

After the referendum which passed the 1937 Constitution, Jacob joined the Women's Social and Political League (soon to be renamed as the Women's Social and Progressive League), which aimed 'to monitor legislation affecting women.'[57] Her response also included letters, articles and stories which she wrote during the 1930s. She was a regular contributor to newspapers throughout the decade, most frequently to the *Irish Press*, which published five of her stories in 1935. Among their themes were Irish history, Irish folklore and free speech. However, her most articulate and extensive response to the erosion of democratic rights was a book that would reflect the international scope and secular intentions of those who began the struggle for independence. From the late 1920s to the mid 1930s she put much of her energy into the research and writing of *The Rise of the United Irishmen 1791-1794*, parts of it appearing weekly in the Republican newspaper, *An Phoblacht*. Published in 1937, the book's main focus is from 1791, the founding year of the United Irishmen, to 1794, when they were outlawed by the British government.

The Rise of the United Irishmen is Jacob's most important work of non-fiction. Her research on the period took almost a decade to complete, a decade that coincided with the glaring reversal of democratic and progressive thinking in the Free State. From the divorce debate in 1928, to the rewriting of the Irish Constitution in 1936-7, Jacob was compiling and rewriting for a contemporary audience an interpretation of a pivotal period in Irish history 'where people devoted their lives to Independence, freedom of religion, and the right of all men [*sic*] to vote.' Her focus on the past was an attempt to illuminate the misdeeds of the present.

The book offered an explanation of the United Irish movement, its impact on the period and its relationship with the various organisations in the country, including the Catholic Committee, the Volunteers and the Defenders. The comprehensive introduction provides a brief summary of events from the plantations of the seventeenth century up to 1791. She saw the plantations and the penal laws as creating a split country where 'two civilisations, two languages, two nations, two ways of life, dwelt, conflicting together, in a country, one conquering and possessing, the other enslaved; and the broad line of demarcation between them was religion.'[58]

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[56] Rosamond Jacob, 'The right to kill', in *Ireland Today*, April 1937.

[57] Hilda Tweedy, *A Link In The Chain: The Story of Irish Housewives Association 1942-1992* (Dublin, 1992), p. 19.

[58] Rosamond Jacob, *The Rise of the United Irishmen 1791-1794* (London, 1937), p. 13.

The 1791 Declaration of the United Irishmen called for 'a cordial union among all the people of Ireland', and a radical reform of the representation of the people in parliament to include Irishmen of every religious persuasion. Jacob viewed the declaration as a turning point in Irish history, writing that 'before 1791 there were in the country only the British colonists and the enslaved Irish; after [1791] parties took a new division – those who stood for privilege and foreign government, and those who stood for an Irish nation, democratic and self-governed.' While this quotation did not make it into the body of the published text, Jacob's colonial analysis permeates throughout. From a democratic viewpoint, she found one fault with the United Irishmen's declaration: that it 'takes it for granted, in perfect good faith, that there is but one sex in humanity, and that male. The idea that women were human beings, with human rights, had not occurred to anyone, except Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine.' A chief tenet of the United Irishmen was international brotherhood, and one chapter specifically deals with the friendly relationship between the United Irishmen and the societies springing up in both Scotland and England as a result of the French Revolution.

Following the success of *The United Irishmen* Jacob finally found a publisher for *The Troubled House*, though Jacob herself funded the printing costs. Having waited seventeen years to be published again she enjoyed the renewed interest in her work, and in 1938 she was invited to give a radio broadcast on 'Dublin in 1798.' In December she gave a lecture on 'The Women of 1798.' In 1939 she was a participant in a broadcast on 'Nationality', and during the same year presented a talk on 'Androcentric Culture.'

The 1940s were a difficult period in Jacob's life. In financial terms the cost of living had risen due to the war.[39] She also lost several close friends. The first was Frank Ryan, with whom she had worked during the late 1920s. Ryan had fought in the International Brigade for the republicans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39. He was taken prisoner but, because he was a general in the brigade, Franco refused to release him after the war. In 1940 Jacob headed a campaign to free him. Though operating through the highest diplomatic channels, which included L.H. Kenny, the Irish Ambassador to Spain, the request went unheeded. By the following year Jacob lost contact with Ryan, and in 1943 she received the news of his death.

She moved in with Helen McGinley, a friend since the 1920s, to care for and nurse her, as her physical and mental health deteriorated for several years

[39] When Jacob lived in Waterford she did not need a job, as there was income set aside for her while she cared for her mother. After her move to Dublin in 1920, it is not clear whether this income covered her increased expenses. By the 1930s she supplemented it by journalism, history and fiction. Never able to afford her own apartment, she shared with different women during her forty years in Dublin and lived modestly.

before her death in 1949. During these years Jacob also lost her close friends, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Lucy Kingston's husband Swik. She found consolation in the fact that her only niece, Margaret, and nephew, Chris, had moved from Waterford to Dublin, affording her the opportunity of getting to know them better. She continued to write and to be politically active. By 1942 she had completed 'The Naked Truth', a play which sketched the life of Wolfe Tone, which was never published. For much of the decade she was honorary secretary of the Women's Social and Progressive League. By 1945 the end of the war signified for Jacob the end of 'a constant nightmare of thinking what is going on abroad, and makes a slight brightening of material prospects', though she noted that the '[A]llies are as repulsive as victors always are, and the Russians do themselves no credit.'[60]

In 1949, she moved to Charleville Road, Rathmines, to share the top floor of the house with Lucy Kingston. Here she spent the last eleven years of her life. The arrangement worked well for both women who had been friends and political colleagues for almost thirty years. Lucy was then chair and Rose honorary secretary of the Women's Social and Progressive League. In her early sixties at the time, Jacob lived an active physical as well as intellectual and political life. Her bicycle continued to act as her main form of transport in the city, and she regularly hiked in the Dublin and Wicklow mountains.

During the 1940s she published a number of articles in the newspapers, though much of her energy went into producing three texts: 'The Naked Truth', *The Raven's Glen* and 'Matilda Tone: A Memoir'. All went unpublished. The last was the most ambitious. Her interest in Martha Witherington, known as Matilda Tone, the wife of Wolfe Tone, developed during her research for the *Rise of the United Irishmen* when she noted:

> All we know of Matilda Tone is contained in her husband's autobiography, in two of her letters and an account she wrote of her life in France with her children between Tone's death in 1798 and her marriage to Henry Wilson in 1816. But from the materials, tantalisingly incomplete as they are, we know her, and we see her as a human being surpassed in quality by scarcely any character in our history, although in that history, technically speaking, she has no place.[61]

Martha Witherington, at the age of sixteen, eloped with Theobald Wolfe Tone. Their relationship was based on mutual respect, trust and understanding. They discussed everything, shared the same political opinions and his achievements owed much to her support. Matilda tolerated what Marianne Elliot characterises

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[60] Jacob Diaries, 31 December 1945, Ms 32,582 (116).
[61] Jacob Papers, Ms 33,107-33 (246).

as the eccentricity and impulsiveness of Tone.[62] She took responsibility for raising and educating their children. After Tone's death, the twenty-nine year old Matilda was left destitute in France with three children to support. With the help of Thomas Addis Emmet she secured a widow's pension from the French Army. Having lost two of her children through fever, Matilda won a guarantee for her son William's French naturalisation by personally presenting a letter of appeal to Napoleon. This secured William a place in the Imperial Cavalry School at St. Germain. For eighteen years in France she was sustained by her love for her son and the support of Thomas Wilson, a Scot she had met on her voyage to France from America, and whom she married after nineteen years of friendship. When William moved to the United States, the couple followed, first to New York and then to Washington, D.C. There Matilda lived until her death in 1849, aged seventy-nine.

Jacob had finished 'A Memoir' by 1950, but, failing to find a publisher, she rewrote the text as historical fiction, which in 1957 was published as *The Rebel's Wife*. The following year, to Jacob's delight, it was awarded 'Book of the Year' by the Women Writers' Club. She was honoured at their 25th Anniversary Banquet, where Owen Sheehy Skeffington's speech on Jacob was, for her, 'the best thing in the year.'[63] It is curious to see how the literary critics viewed the work. The review in the *Irish Times* offers an example:

> At the present time, when from one reason or another the rising generation in Ireland seems to be forgetting the deeds and sacrifices of the brave men who rose in dark and evil days, it is a relief to find the story retold with such sympathetic understanding and historical accuracy.[64]

The reviewer elides the centrality of the female protagonist and misses the point. While the story is indeed 'retold with sympathetic understanding and historical accuracy', Jacob's focus is not on 'the brave men,' but on the strength, bravery and endurance of Matilda Tone.

During the 1950s Jacob continued to be politically active, working closely with Lucy Kingston in WILPF, and both women attended its 1956 conference in Birmingham in England. In the same decade the remaining members of the IWCLGA, including Jacob and Kingston, merged with The Irish Housewives Association (IHA). Founded in 1942, the original aim of the IHA was 'to unite housewives, so that they may realise, and gain recognition for, their right to play an active part in all spheres of planning for the community.'[65] Its first focus

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[62] Marianne Elliot, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven and London, 1989).

[63] Jacob Diaries, 31 December 1958, Ms 32,582 (164).

[64] *Irish Times*, 15 February 1958.

[65] Tweedy, *A Link in the Chain*, p. 112.

was on consumer rights, but it soon adopted a feminist agenda committed to 'a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities for all persons.'[66] In 1961, one year after Jacob's death, Lucy Kingston's comments about a meeting of the IHA offer some insights into the role Jacob had played in the organisation:

> Very retrogressive atmosphere on many questions, including school meals, nursery centres etc. I never miss Rose so greatly as on these occasions, she never let anything in the nature of a backwash towards anti-feminism pass without protest. Wish there were more 'protestants' in this sense.[67]

In the last couple of years of her life, Jacob was a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). She believed that nuclear testing was harmful, especially to unborn children and was concerned with the dissemination of truth, as opposed to what she perceived as a conspiracy to keep the population ignorant about 'large areas of nuclear physics now kept secret', and their use in creating 'large scale weapons … which destroy people indiscriminately', rather than 'for useful work.'[68] However, the CND's efforts to educate the Irish public became entangled with other politics. At a Civil Liberties Council meeting in 1958, when someone suggested a public meeting against nuclear weapons, 'Dorothy Macardle object[ed] to anything definitely against them and talking of "the enemy" meaning Russia. It was decided better to have a public meeting on Freedom in the Theatre.' Jacob commented with some irony, that '[n]uclear weapons are not exactly connected to civil liberty here.'[69] Until the end of her life she was also a member of the Anti-Vivisection Society, a continuation of her earlier work with the Society for Prevention to Cruelty to Animals, and both, no doubt, directly connected to her lifelong commitment to vegetarianism. In 1959 Jacob lost her brother Tom, after a long illness. Kingston noted that 'something is gone out of Rose's life – quite irreplaceable.'[70] What was gone was the special friendship they had shared throughout their lives. Their early years of isolation from other children, their parents' unorthodox beliefs, and their physical proximity until Rose moved to Dublin all contributed to their closeness.

In 1960 *The Raven's Glen,* written in 1945 but repeatedly rejected by publishers, finally appeared in print. After the success of *The Rebel's Wife* Jacob had revised both 'Third Person Singular' and *The Raven's Glen. The Raven's Glen* moves outside the confines of Christian Ireland and reinvents a tradition of matriarchal lineage since erased from Irish history. Its intended audience

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[66] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[67] Swanton, *Emerging from the Shadow*, p. 157.
[68] Shanahan Papers.
[69] Jacob Diaries, 7 February 1958, Ms 32,582 (161).
[70] Swanton, *Emerging from the Shadow*, p. 154.

appears to be adolescents and it centres on the adventures of a group of teenage cousins on holiday in the Glen of Imaal in County Wicklow. They encounter a Miss Kelly, whose real name is Mor a' Chaillighe, a direct matrilineal descendant of the Cailleach, original keeper of the Raven's Glen, who dates back to a pre-Christian era in Irish history. Mor lives alone at the top of the glen, and is considered a witch by the locals.

The children meet Mor, when one of the boys cuts his leg, and she treats it with herbs from her garden. When the children accidentally stumble upon a hidden tomb at the end of the 'hag's road', the 'oldest path in the glen', Mor reveals her true identity. She explains that the tomb is 'the grave of the woman that was the first keeper of the glen, more centuries ago than anyone knows … The Cailleach they call her.'[71] Characteristically, Jacob does not ignore the role of the Catholic Church in the destruction of the old culture and religion as Mor explains that the little church across the river was built on the site of a clochán belonging to the Cailleach which was pulled down to build the church. Mor's greatest fear, that when she dies 'there'll never be another [cailleach]' is relieved when her niece, Moreen Kelly, becomes her apprentice and the tradition of the Cailleach is secured.

On 24 September, 1960, Jacob and Lucy Kingston spent four hours at the Ideal Homes Exhibition 'trying to interest people in *The Irish Housewife* magazine, and encourage them to join the association.'[72] From there Jacob was making her way to Harold's Cross Hospice where she regularly visited some elderly people, reading and talking with them. As she was crossing a street she was knocked down by a motorist. She was brought to the Meath Hospital unconscious, suffering from head injuries and broken legs. She never recovered consciousness and subsequently contracted pneumonia. She died in hospital on October 11, 1960, politically active to the end. Of her funeral Lucy Kingston would later reflect: 'very large number, a 'representative' funeral, but so many things to represent!'[73] These words aptly captured the breadth of activities that encompassed Rose Jacob's world.

Jacob's work and life have been neglected by Irish literary critics and historians perhaps because both were so uncompromising with regard to the issues of Irish independence, religious freedom and women's rights. Both her writing and political work challenged the ruling ethos in the country. Her agnostic and republican beliefs differed in almost every respect from those of most of her class and contemporaries. Jacob's work was too volatile, too critical, for the sensibilities of an emerging patriarchal state. The resistance to her kind of political convictions are mirrored in the reluctance to publish her work. Today, all her previously published work remains out of print.

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[71] Rosamond Jacob, *The Raven's Glen* (Dublin, 1960), p. 145.
[72] Swanton, *Emerging from the Shadow*, p. 156.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

The threads that weave through all Rosamond Jacob's years of political activity are her feminist consciousness and her unwavering insistence on educating both men and women on their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Representing a continuum of political action spanning half a century, her work was accomplished within a nation which was first a colonial state, later the Irish Free State, and then the Republic of Ireland. Over the years Jacob's writing reflected her acute awareness of patriarchal control of institutions of power, and the intersection of this power with gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity and nationality. She was a visionary and a global feminist, who spent her life forming coalitions by crossing class, gender, ethnic and national boundaries. Her politics, principles, ethics and humanitarianism are relevant to many current issues, including women's reproductive rights in the Republic, the peace process in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland's relationship to global capitalism, animal rights, and the continued threat to public health and the environment from nuclear weapons and industrial pollution. Four decades after her death perhaps we are ready for a new appreciation of Jacob's life and writings.

Published Books:

Callaghan (published under pseudonym F. Winthrop), (Dublin: Martin Lester Ltd., 1920).

The Rise Of The United Irishmen 1791-1794 (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1937).

The Troubled House (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1938).

The Rebel's Wife (Tralee: The Kerryman Ltd., 1957).

The Raven's Glen (Dublin: Allen Figgis & Co. Ltd., 1960).

Unpublished Books:

Third Person Singular

Matilda Tone: A Memoir

Short Stories:

'Two days long ago' (published under the pseudonym F. Winthrop), *Green and Gold* 2, 6, (March/May 1922), pp. 1-6.

'Trailing clouds of glory', *Green and Gold*, 2, 9, (December 1922), pp. 309-316.

Essay:

'The right to kill.' Letter of the Month in *Ireland Today*, (April 1937), pp. 58-60.