"Much the More Political of the Two": Mabel FitzGerald and the Irish Revolution

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This article offers an assessment of the career and ideology of the Irish republican and Cumann na mBan activist Mabel FitzGerald, née McConnell (1884-1958). From a staunchly-unionist Belfast Presbyterian family, Mabel converted to republicanism while an undergraduate in the early 1900s. In 1911 she eloped with Desmond FitzGerald, a Catholic poet. The couple became prominent nationalist activists, and participated in the Easter Rising. In 1922 Desmond, now a minister in the provisional government, supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty. This caused a rift with Mabel, who remained a republican. Although she chose not to separate from her husband, she retained her republican sympathies; there is evidence that she continued to offer aid to the anti-Treaty side. After the Civil War, Mabel and Desmond were reconciled, and she strongly revised her political views, eventually coming to regret the Irish separatist project. The career of Mabel FitzGerald offers insight into the nature of radicalisation among Irish nationalist activists, as well as providing an example of the competing loyalties of family and politics that frequently informed and constrained the actions of nationalist activists.

Key words: Irish nationalism; republicanism; radicalisation; women; religion

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The recent centenary of the Easter Rising has prompted increased interest in the careers and formative influences of Irish republican activists.[1] However, one strand of Irish advanced nationalism that remains neglected is the Protestant republican tradition.[2] During the Irish revolutionary period, Protestants – frequently Ulster Protestants – played a small but influential role in the republican movement. Protestant republicans, as a religious minority among nationalists, and a political minority among their co-religionists, formed a vibrant counterculture within Irish life. Analysis of this group has the potential to enhance our understanding of religious and political identity during the revolutionary era. One such Protestant republican is Mabel FitzGerald, née McConnell (1884-1958). Mabel, if she is recalled at all, is remembered as the wife of 1916 rebel and Irish Free State politician Desmond FitzGerald, or, as mother of former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald.[3] However, Mabel FitzGerald has relevance to our understanding of how a number of Ulster Protestants – among them Roger Casement, Bulmer Hobson, and George Irvine – came to play important roles in the republican movement.[4]

Mabel FitzGerald's complex personal relationships – with her husband, her parents, and her friends – provides insight into the manner in which the revolutionary generation frequently had to negotiate their republican activism with an array of other obligations. For example, shared interest in Irish nationalism played a role in Mabel and Desmond's courtship; however, their dispute over whether to accept the Anglo-Irish Treaty almost broke them apart. Garret FitzGerald favourably compared Mabel to her husband, stating that she was "the stronger character, and much the more political of the two".[5] Anti-Treaty women have been depicted as near-hysterical warmongers irrationally opposing men's calm desire for compromise.[6] The few published accounts of Mabel place her in this category: she has been characterised as a troublesome woman who kicked her husband out of the family home for supporting the Anglo-Irish Treaty.[7] A close reading of the sources casts doubt on this

construction. This article, using correspondence, memoirs, official depositions, press reports, and other sources, will reconstruct the varied career of Mabel FitzGerald, a complex individual, who developed an ambivalent relationship with republicanism, and who, at a moment of grave crisis, chose to place the interests of her young family before politics.

I

Mabel Washington McConnell was born in Belfast in 1884, daughter of prominent Presbyterian businessman John McConnell, and Margaret McConnell (née Neill). McConnell was managing director of the Royal Irish Distillery, which since 1870 had been owned by James Craig Snr., father of Ulster unionist politician James Craig. McConnell was a unionist, a freemason, and, in the words of Ernest Blythe who had experience of him, "an exceedingly cranky magistrate".[8] Mabel's extended family was also strongly unionist. Her first cousin-in-law, William Hunter, a physician in Crumlin, County Antrim, was one of the drivers who helped distribute the Ulster Volunteers' arms that were landed in Larne in April 1914.[9] Clearly, Mabel's background militated against her becoming an Irish nationalist. However, there were other factors at work. Belfast, a teeming industrial city of about 380,000 inhabitants, was not only the metropolitan centre of Ulster unionism: it was also home to a vibrant Protestant nationalist counterculture.

This milieu was centred on the solicitor and antiquarian Francis Joseph Bigger (1863-1926). Ardrigh, Bigger's comfortable Belfast residence became the focal point for informal meetings of cultural and political nationalists, both Protestant and Catholic. Unionists, even Orangemen, were also welcome. Groups of thirty or forty gathered in the house for a meal followed by a céilí.[10] Among those who attended these gatherings were the Quaker nationalist Bulmer Hobson, the Catholic poet Joseph Campbell, the historian Alice Stopford Green, the diplomat and humanitarian Roger Casement, and the Irish Republican Brotherhood activist

Denis McCullough. Ardrigh played host to more than just agreeable gatherings for like-minded people. Bigger's house included a substantial library which he allowed his friends to use, along with a vast collection of artefacts and manuscripts. Bigger hosted evenings devoted to Irish music, politics and culture.[11] Originally mainly cultural nationalist in nature, by the early 1900s many members of this group had progressed to eschew political unionism for advanced nationalism. Among these were Robert Wilson Lynd, Bulmer Hobson, Captain Jack White and Roger Casement.

Queen's College Belfast (QCB) was not immune to the impact of the cultural revivalist and nationalist ideas then becoming fashionable. The Rev. Thomas M. Johnstone, later Presbyterian moderator, described a heady nationalism among undergraduates. He remembered students as being "proud to count ourselves Irish, and loved to burn incense on the altar of patriotism".[12] In 1906, Cumann Gaedhealach an Cólaiste (The College Gaelic Society) was founded.[13] This was solely a cultural organisation: an official college publication stated that "The Society is strictly non-political and non-sectarian. Any member introducing a religious or political subject at any of its meetings shall cease to be a member".[14] The College Gaelic Society, which was largely Protestant in membership, exhibited its non-political and non-sectarian nature through a tactful choice of patrons: QCB president the Rev. Thomas Hamilton, and Lord Castletown, a colourful figure who combined support for home rule with the presidency of the Pan-Celtic League. Mabel McConnell, cultured and literary-minded, was attracted to this society. After studying in Victoria College Belfast from 1894 to 1902, Mabel entered QCB in 1902. Here Mabel, in common with many young Protestant intellectuals, learned Irish: she joined the College Gaelic Society, serving on its committee 1906-1907, and took to calling herself Meadhbh Ní Chonaill.[15] Her elder sister Lizzie – or Éilís – also became an Irish language enthusiast.[16]

One factor which may have propelled Mabel towards Irish-language activism was her close friendship with Robert Lynd, later a well-known journalist and essayist. Lynd, who also came from a prominent Belfast Protestant family – his father had served as moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly – was converted to cultural nationalism and republicanism as an undergraduate at QCB, and was active in the Bigger circle. He became a fluent Irish speaker and was a pseudonymous contributor to Bulmer Hobson's *The Republic.* Two of his sisters, Dorothy and Lucie, also republicans, were Mabel's close friends, and served with her on the Cumann Gaedhealach committee.[17] Éilís McConnell, although an Irish-language activist, retained her family's unionist politics.[18] Mabel by contrast became a political as well as cultural radical: in Garret FitzGerald's words, "By the time she left Queen's she seems to have become a republican, suffragette and socialist – but mainly the first".[19] The tendency for cultural activism to lead to greater political engagement has been noted by Douglas Hyde, the first president of the Gaelic League. Hyde claimed that during this era, "a great many unionists, mostly ladies, were attracted into the [language] movement … A year or two of this study usually ate away their unionist tendencies like an acid, and left them convinced Nationalists".[20] Although the earliest date that Mabel can be placed in Francis Joseph Bigger's circle is 1913,[21] it seems almost certain, considering her religion, language activism, and friendship with the Lynds, that she came under the influence of this group far earlier. Belfast Protestant converts to nationalism, such as Robert Lynd and Mabel McConnell, faced deep hostility from within their own social group, which led them to forge close friendships with their fellow activists. The group Mabel moved in, however fleetingly, was full of intense, gifted people, who devoted themselves entirely to their cause. This may make some of her later choices more understandable.

In 1906 Mabel graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, winning a prize for history.[22] In 1908 she moved to London, where she took a teacher's diploma. She worked for a few

months in 1909 as secretary to the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, which led to a friendship.[23] In 1911 she undertook some secretarial work for the novelist George Moore. In contrast to Shaw, she seems to have found Moore as difficult to get on with as most other people did; a friend of Moore wrote: "I am sure you must be relieved to be rid of him for a while … He is enough to give a whole army the fidgets, I know nothing so catching as fidgets – I feel them in me now after getting his letter".[24] In London she continued her cultural revival activities, joining the Central Branch of the Gaelic League. It may have been here, in 1910, that she met her future husband, Desmond FitzGerald (1888-1947).[25]

II

Desmond FitzGerald, a London-born son of Irish parents, was a promising modernist poet in the Imagist set, whose acquaintances included Ezra Pound. He had a day job as a clerk for a soft-goods merchant.[26] Among his friends in London was the Ulster poet Joseph Campbell (1879-1944), whose Anglican-born wife Nancy (née Maude) would later become one of Mabel's closest friends.[27] FitzGerald shared Mabel's Irish cultural and literary interests: as a romantic youth he had changed his name from Thomas Joseph to Desmond. From his teenage years he sympathised with Sinn Féin and denigrated the constitutional nationalist Irish Parliamentary Party.[28] He was also, in contrast to the Presbyterian Mabel, a devout Catholic. Although they were both advanced nationalists, from the beginning of their relationship she was more radical, in that she advocated an entirely separate Irish republic. Desmond's views during this period are more difficult to discern, but he was probably willing to contemplate a degree of independence that fell short of a republic. Although Mabel influenced Desmond's politics, from the outset they did not agree on everything. This became an issue during their courtship, with Desmond forced to reassure Mabel that he respected her political views; he may have begun to find the political circles they were moving in too aggressive for his tastes.

Desmond certainly resented the amount of time Mabel spent attending political gatherings, which occasionally prevented the couple from meeting. One such clashing commitment led Desmond to make light-hearted assurance that he took her interests seriously: "I would not like to wean you from your enthusiasm and attachment to ... [Sinn Fein] … principles – even if I could", he said.[29] Throughout their marriage a tension can be seen between the political intransigence of Mabel and her laconic husband's more moderate instincts. George Bernard Shaw was aware of this, stating, "I have some … masculine sympathy with Desmond, whose head you are knocking against a stone wall".[30] A similar dynamic can be seen throughout much of the rest of the couple's marriage.

Unsurprisingly, Mabel's wealthy unionist family strongly disapproved of her attachment to a poor Catholic poet, and wished to prevent any union.[31] The clash of cultures is evident from their correspondence, with Desmond telling Mabel, "Alas, Kiddie, there are hindrances. The need to work, the lack of funds, and what people would think. The last doesn't enter into my considerations ever, because I'm selfish. But I know it's important". [32] Such was the level of family hostility to the match it appears Mabel may have sought to break the connection, causing Desmond to write: "I hope exceedingly that the mood that regrets ever having known me has passed off by now … I hate to think of my being cause of grief to you, but at the same time I dread meaning nothing to you".[33] Seeking to separate the couple, in April 1911 John McConnell summoned his daughter back from London.[34] Luckily perhaps for Desmond, Mabel was staying in her family holiday home in County Down when she discovered she was pregnant; according to FitzGerald family legend, she escaped from a window with the help of a family friend, and hence to London, where, on 13 May 1911 the couple were married.[35] The acrimonious circumstances of the wedding occasioned the couple's friend Jack B. Yeats to compose a humorous ink over pencil drawing, "Mabel's Wedding", inscribed "The full house of Irish love / Was Mabel Fitzger-ald", that shows

imagined guests at the service carrying various weapons such as clubs. An auction catalogue states:

> Evidently this drawing was intended as a humorous comment on the marriage in 1911 of Yeats' friends Desmond FitzGerald and Mabel McConnell. … The marriage followed an unexpected pregnancy, and the families of both bride and groom disapproved of the match - hence the imagined display of clubs and other implements. Yeats often gave sketches to his friends as wedding presents, but the drawing remained in [Yeats] family possession, so presumably he thought better of it on this occasion.[36]

After marrying, the couple spent some time in Saint-Jean-du-Doigt, a northern Brittany town popular with writers and artists. The reason for this sojourn may have been to allow sufficient time between the wedding and meeting Mabel's family so that an older-looking child would not attract speculation about whether he was conceived premaritally. This may have been the reason for Mabel and Desmond's involvement in a strange episode in Brittany. Their new-born son, named Desmond after his father, was registered, not under the surname FitzGerald, but rather under his father's adopted Christian name as his last name. This child, in later life called Desmond FitzGerald jnr., was registered on birth as "Patrice Jean Marie Desmond". Their intention may have been to muddle the record so the baby's birth certificate and age relative to their marriage was difficult to trace.[37]

In March 1913, after about eighteen months in Brittany, Desmond and Mabel moved to the Dingle peninsula in County Kerry. They felt, "for no tangible reason whatever … either that there was going to be a great movement in Ireland, or that it was necessary that some movement should be launched that would require the active work of everyone who was willing to assist."[38] They rented part of the old coastguard station on a promontory opposite the village of Ventry. [39] Desmond threw himself into advanced nationalist activity, joining the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and organising the local Irish Volunteers. Here he made common cause with Michael "The" O'Rahilly, the Kerry-born republican activist, and the

Antrim-born Protestant nationalist Ernest Blythe, who was living in Kerry to learn Irish.[40] According to Garret FitzGerald, his parents' period in Kerry was brought to an abrupt end due to Mabel's decision to keep hens to feed her family. She fed the chickens at night by lamplight, which caused the Royal Irish Constabulary to conclude that Desmond was signalling to German submarines.[41] As a result, in January 1915 the family was compelled under the Defence of the Realm Act to move to Bray, County Wicklow.

Mabel's family soon overcame their hostility to the marriage. Although Mabel would later describe John McConnell as "Narrow and bigoted in his political views less so in his religious ones" with a "passionate temper", any breach was quickly healed. Mabel and Desmond spent Christmas 1913 with her family in Belfast; [42] Mabel's mother even visited the family in Ventry after the birth of the couple's second son, Pierce in early 1914; John McConnell did not discontinue the quarterly income he gave his daughter, which probably allowed Mabel and Desmond live in Kerry. This level of entente is remarkable in light of John McConnell's continued unionist convictions. In 1912 he signed the Ulster Covenant, which pledged signatories to defend Ulster from home rule by force of arms if necessary.[43] Such tranquillity is even stranger considering Desmond and Mabel's decision to raise their children as Catholic. In a letter to Desmond in 1916, Mabel referred to their "agreement of mind on the subject" of their children's religion.[44] Desmond was a committed Catholic, whereas Mabel, who remained a Presbyterian until 1943 (see below), felt less strongly about religion than her husband: raising her boys as Catholics may have been one of the easier compromises she was forced to make.

Between 1914 and 1916 Mabel corresponded with George Bernard Shaw, seeking to convert him to the advanced nationalist cause. Shaw was a constitutional nationalist, and was unlikely to accede to Mabel's requests. Their correspondence, however, is good-natured, and frequently playful. She asked him to:

stop bothering about such a childish and vacuous people as the English and come right over here to work for Ireland a Nation; I would like to see you moved by a flash of revelation to shake the dust of England off your feet and to put yourself in touch with all that is most advanced in nationalism here, to work as Roger Casement is doing to make Ireland a nation before empire. That is the destiny I would arrange for you, to fight with pen, purse, and shall I say pike … has the great adventure no appeal for you?[45]

She stated her support for the German side in the Great War and belief that the Irish Parliamentary Party was a spent force:

Redmond is dead as a doornail in Ireland … the Irish Volunteers are the only real force … Since the war started Ireland has put aside the shabby little dream of paper freedom that was all Redmond could get from England and has seen a larger vision.[46]

Shaw should throw his reputation behind the advanced cause:

What is needed now is for someone to clear the air by asserting Ireland's right if she doesn't like the bone which England offers, and which she has a strong suspicion England intends to snatch away and fling to hungry Carson, to try and secure a fuller meal from Germany if that country is enabled by circumstances to offer it. Nobody but you could do it and keep out of prison.[47]

Shaw was too wily to be so easily captured by his former secretary, and insisted on viewing Mabel's beseeches as a cry for attention. There was:

very little use talking to a born Orangewoman who is also a bit of a spoilt beauty. … I positively forbid you to get yourself into trouble out of mere devilment.[48]

Shaw's letters to Mabel make clear that his attitude to the Great War lay firmly within the moderate nationalist tradition, which, under John Redmond's leadership had lent its support to conflict with Germany:

All the hopes of the unionists have been revived by the pro-German folly in Ireland. … Only throw Ireland on the side of Prussia in this war, and the weary labour of nearly fifty years will be wiped out at a stroke. … If you have one atom of sense left – if the little view from Dingle has not made you forget the whole great political

horizon of Europe – you will try to make Ireland resound with anti-Prussianism until the end of the war.[49]

Further differences of opinion can be seen in her comments on how she was raising her young son, Desmond:

I am bringing up my small son with the sound traditional hatred of England and all her ways – you should just hear him say Sasanach, the concentrated hate in his voice is worthy of Drury Lane[50]

Shaw's reply was revealing:

As an Ulsterwoman, you must be aware that if you bring up your son to hate anyone except a Papist, you will go to hell. … You must be a wicked devil to load a child's innocent soul with a burden of old hatreds and rancours that Ireland is sick of. … You make that boy a good international socialist – a good Catholic, in fact, in a true sense[51]

Although Shaw was fond of Mabel, he had no sympathy for the advanced nationalist arguments she put forward. His letters end on a note of Shavian indignation:

I want to rub my eyes for you and waken you up. Ireland is your plaything at present, because you are an educated woman trying to live the life of a peasant. You have put yourself out of reach of Beethoven and the orchestra; so I suppose you must have something to play with. But you shan't play with ME madam.[52]

Shaw's remarks cast light on one aspect of the Protestant nationalist, and in particular the Protestant nationalist female experience: Mabel, the "born Orangewoman" can only "play" the Irish nationalist. Throughout this period Constance Markievicz, Maud Gonne, and Albinia Brodrick would have their motivation for joining the nationalist movement maligned as adventurism, faddism, or self-indulgence.

In Bray, Desmond, who had taken the anti-Redmond side when the Irish Volunteers split over whether to support the British war effort, continued his nationalist activities. In October 1915 he was convicted of making a seditious anti-recruitment speech in the town. The six-month sentence he received brought him to national prominence.[53] Mabel wrote

Desmond in Mountjoy expressing hope he would keep his health for her sake, while attaching greater importance to his retaining ideological strength: “keep well for me, nothing else matters so much, always excepting that you should keep faithful to Ireland”.[54] This tension between the personal and the political would be seen again during the Civil War. While Desmond was in prison, Mabel was given a job in Irish Volunteer headquarters by Bulmer Hobson, then general secretary of that organisation. She also continued to receive an allowance from her father.[55]

Desmond was released three weeks before the Easter Rising of 1916. Originally opposed to the decision to mount an insurrection in Easter week, he, like his friend Michael O’Rahilly, decided to take part out of loyalty to the men he had trained, despite believing the project doomed without German support. On the day of the Rising the FitzGeralds’ two children were being looked after by a family acquaintance, as Mabel had gone to England on Volunteer business, and Desmond was immersed in rebellion-intrigue. On deciding to join the rebellion, he left Dublin for Bray, to say goodbye to his children; he did not expect to survive the insurrection. At Bray station he met Mabel by chance; she had just returned from England. According to Mabel’s account, they rushed to see their children before catching the train to Dublin, to take part in the rebellion.[56] Desmond believed, and Mabel may have agreed, that the rebellion would fail, and those who took part in it would die. Neither Mabel nor Desmond expected to see their children again. Only a few hours later, seeing the flag raised on the roof of the rebel headquarters, the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin, Desmond told his wife, “This is worth getting wiped out for”.[57]

In the GPO, Desmond was appointed adjutant to Michael O’Rahilly, and took charge of the rebels’ food supply. On Easter Tuesday, believing Dublin Castle to have been captured by the rebels, Padraig Pearse sent Mabel to take a flag to be hoisted above the castle. However, she later returned with the unhappy news that that the castle had not fallen, having

herself narrowly escaped capture by the British garrison.[58] At this point Pearse, commander of the rebels, instructed her to return home to Bray, believing that both parents of small children should not be at risk of death.[59]

On Friday 28 April, hopelessly outnumbered and with the GPO in flames, the rebels surrendered. By now Mabel and Desmond's old friends, Joseph and Nancy Campbell, had become concerned for the safety of the FitzGerald children, Desmond jnr., and Pierce. On Saturday 29 April, Joseph Campbell set out for Bray to find the children, and bring them back to the safety of Kilmolin House near Enniskerry, the Campbell's Wicklow home. To his surprise he found Mabel, who he had believed was captured or dead. "Poor Mrs FitzGerald was nearly distracted, she had left Desmond in the GPO on Tuesday, since [she heard] it was in flames. She was sure she would never see him again".[60] Her state of mind was not helped by the post-Rising rumour mill:

> Mr FitzGerald had been slain by word of mouth dozens of times. The last story was that he was lying in the morgue with 14 bullet wounds. At that we had a little hope, as it seemed unlikely anyone would have seen him there or counted the shots![61]

The following day, Nancy Campbell had just put her own children to bed when she received an unexpected visitor:

> "You didn't expect to see *me* alive did you", said the apparition with the cheerful if dog-tired grin. "It *isn't* it can't be – why I thought you were dead – we heard you were killed".

It was Desmond FitzGerald, on the run but "as cheerful apparently as ever".[62] He had by luck escaped Dublin. The next day Desmond left for Bray, where he was reunited with his family. Here he stayed, hidden in an attic, until his arrest nine days later.

Desmond was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment, with ten years remitted. Although Desmond took his sentence with good humour and appeared to have few regrets,

Mabel was unprepared for it and could not countenance life without him.[63] She embarked on a letter-writing campaign to ensure an amnesty for her husband, highlighting his non-combatant status in the GPO, and his lack of involvement in planning the Rising. Among those she wrote to were George Bernard Shaw, William Walsh, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, and, momentarily casting aside her republican convictions, prominent home rulers T.M Healy and John Redmond, as well as the Brigadier General of Richmond Barracks.[64]

Mabel's family avoided recrimination, but instead offered sympathy for her plight, especially regarding the harshness of Desmond's sentence. Far from being angered at Mabel's activities, they offered her support. Mabel's mother assured her "you are never out of my thoughts day & night",[65] while her father agreed to continue making financial allowance for her.[66] (Neither Mabel nor Desmond had any qualms about accepting John McConnell's money, which would prove invaluable in the years ahead). This level of entente between the unionist McConnells and the republican FitzGeralds was highly unusual during the revolutionary era. A Protestant convert to nationalism such as Mabel could have expected to be excoriated by her family. When imprisoned for revolutionary activity, Dr. Kathleen Lynn's clergyman father offered her an ultimatum that she should discontinue her nationalist activities; when she refused, she was barred from the family home.[67] Another Protestant republican from a unionist family, the Hon. Albinia Brodrick, found her politics incompatible with any contact with her relatives.[68] Nancy Maude's marriage to impecunious Catholic poet Joseph Campbell caused a rift with her English unionist family.[69] Mabel FitzGerald suffered no such sanctions.

III

Shortly before Desmond's release in the general amnesty in mid-1917, Mabel moved her family to Rathmines, where she taught in a school run by her friend, and former GPO rebel,

Louise Gavan Duffy. Mabel played a more prominent political role in this period. Throughout 1917 and 1918 Sinn Féin fought the Irish Parliamentary Party in a series of tightly-contested by-elections. As a well-known member of Cumann na mBan, Mabel was called upon by Sinn Féin to add a female voice to these campaigns, leading to her appearing on several by-election platforms.[70]

In May 1918, Desmond was re-arrested, when, along with other Sinn Féiners, he was accused of conspiring with Imperial Germany to lead an insurrection in Ireland. It was while her husband was being held in Gloucester Gaol that Mabel made perhaps her most significant foray into nationalist politics: she directed the successful campaign that saw Desmond elected in the December 1918 election, under the slogan commonly used for imprisoned candidates, "Put Him In To Get Him Out". Although 1918 was a triumph for Sinn Féin almost everywhere, Desmond's victory came as a surprise: the new constituency of Pembroke, in Dublin's southside suburbs, had been expected to return a unionist.[71]

Unsurprisingly, in light of the concern she showed for her husband when in custody, the care of republican prisoners would be central to Mabel's activism during this period. After 1916, Cumann na mBan set up a prisoners' subcommittee, which Mabel joined. This sought to improve the treatment of republican prisoners in British and Irish prisons. Mabel herself wrote an open letter to relatives of republican internees that urged them to write to the authorities to enquire whether the prisoners had access to Irish publications and were able to practice their religion.[72]

After his release from prison in 1919, Desmond FitzGerald was appointed Sinn Féin Director of Publicity. As a senior nationalist figure he would spend the next two years on the run, using his English accent to pass himself off as a visiting journalist.[73] During this period Mabel combined raising her family with Cumann na mBan activity.[74] In 1918 she was elected

to the Cumann na mBan executive. In a role which mirrored that of her husband, Mabel was appointed one of Cumann na mBan's propaganda directors, where she helped publicise allegations of British misrule. She also worked in the Sinn Féin publicity office.[75] Two visiting Australian journalists paid homage to her dedication:

> When Mrs. FitzGerald was not at work below she was in the streets, hurrying, no doubt on the business of the Republic, from house to house. She never walked, she went always at a trot. She seemed always behind time, always at the end of her tether; always ready for any new work that might have to be done. If all she did in a day were well done, she must have been one of the most useful members of the Cumann na mBan.[76]

Desmond, who was forced to sleep in different safe-houses each night, occasionally ate meals with his family.[77] On one such occasion, in February 1921, he was arrested and sent to Dublin Castle. Mabel, fearful of the "Bloody Sunday" precedent from November the previous year, when three Volunteers had been "shot while attempting to escape" wrote an account of her husband's arrest and sent it that evening to the various offices of the Dublin press.[78] She explained to Louise Gavan Duffy that "Once it's in the papers the Castle people are less likely to do anything to him".[79] Desmond was interned in the Curragh until his release following the 11 July 1921 truce between the British government and the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Mabel found the post-Rising period extremely stressful. Although ideologically driven, she was psychologically ill-equipped to accept the personal sacrifice demanded of those in active rebellion. She was a notably nervous person, who readily foresaw problems, or even disasters: Mabel refused to bring her children to England during the Great War in case of Zeppelin attacks; she always sat in the back of a cinema in order to allow her escape in case of fire; and for the same reason she would not stay in a hotel room that was higher than the first floor.[80] With her husband spending most of the period after October 1915 either in prison or on the run, she suffered from anxiety, which may have been exacerbated by

caring for her children during their rather serious childhood illnesses. A poem she wrote, entitled “Loneliness”, dated to her ninth wedding anniversary, provides some insight into her unsettled state of mind:

In Winter’s depths I sought for peace

In city streets from end to end,

But found the beat of restless feet

Made every day so long;

So many men, but I lacked my friend,

And what availed the throng? [81]

Desmond was more resilient than his “lonely little girl”.[82] Their correspondence shows him fighting a losing battle to soothe his wife’s anxiety, although occasionally some impatience can be detected:

Sorry to hear the doctor’s report on you. Do you think you could take life easier. I know it is difficult. But so many of your worries have proved unnecessary. … it is no use your letting yourself in for misery and unhealth [sic]. … do whatever is best for your health and peace of mind. I am afraid you will find me particularly unsympathetic about loneliness. Mention of such a thing to me is like talking to a starving man about the pains of overeating. [83]

Despite personal worries, Mabel’s political convictions remained unshaken. Two journalists who befriended her recorded:

She had chosen the thorny instead of the smooth path of life, for … she had been reared in easy circumstances; she had borne three children during her difficulties, she had witnessed raid and arrest, she had had her furniture and clothes destroyed, and she had had to do battle for herself and her children while her husband was in prison. She was tireless in helping on the Republic, which was her creed, and she never complained.[84]

The negotiations with the British government and the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921, which led to the creation of the Irish Free State, placed Mabel in a difficult position. The fact that Desmond was a member of the Dáil Éireann delegation to London ensured that high-level diplomacy would intrude on the FitzGeralds' domestic life.

The decision to compromise with the British prompted a sex division among nationalist activists: most senior IRA officers supported the Treaty; a Cumann na mBan convention overwhelmingly rejected it by 419 votes to 63.[85] Mabel may have had a sense of these tensions as early as March 1921, telling her friend the artist Gladys Hynes, "No woman either in the press or in public boards has asked for a Truce as no Republican woman would take an unworthy Peace."[86] She also guessed that the War of Independence would have, for her, an unsatisfactory conclusion, and had no doubt about where she would stand at the cessation of hostilities: 'If we do not get a Republic at the end of this, there will always be a Republican party, and I shall belong to it. We will never give up the Republic'.[87] During and after the Treaty negotiations Mabel and Desmond's differing outlooks threatened to drive them apart. Although in 1911, or even in 1916, Mabel was capable of provoking or initiating his political activities, by this time Desmond was a significant national figure – he was appointed to the cabinet of the provisional government as minister for external affairs in 1922 – and she was a housewife.

Desmond, a romantic at heart, was aware of the damage a political settlement would do to their marriage. Writing from London in November 1921, he told her: "If only we could be together somewhere away from the world and its troubles. I could be so young and carefree with you".[88] The world and its troubles intruded on the family when Desmond accepted the compromise agreed with Britain the following month, and supported the strong measures taken against former friends and comrades opposed to the agreement.

Like many converts – particularly Protestant and unionist-born female converts – to nationalism, Mabel viewed the Treaty as a betrayal of her political principles. Alongside a band of women including Constance Markievicz, Annie M.P. Smithson, and Albinia Brodrick, Mabel opposed the Treaty. However, Mabel's personal problems, and devotion to her young children's welfare, ensured that although she made her displeasure felt, she did not actively agitate against the Treaty. This decision requires closer scrutiny. For Mabel to have actively campaigned against the Treaty would have necessitated separating from her husband, a course she seriously considered taking. After much soul-searching, Mabel decided her concern for her children trumped her devotion to the republic, and she stayed with Desmond.[89] Mabel's dilemna was understood by her friend, the imprisoned assistant chief of staff of the anti-Treaty IRA, Ernie O'Malley: "I have thought of you often during the past year and sympathised with you in your very difficult position; it must have been very trying for you indeed."[90] Her letters reveal her guilt for remaining with Desmond:

> I think that you should not worry in the least. You did the right thing and anyone who knows you would realise that. The first thing is to keep the home from being broken up, the second to see to the boys.[91]

During the Civil War (1922-1923) their marriage was placed under great strain; they seem to have led generally separate lives. Indeed, such was the gulf between the couple that it has been incorrectly reported that the FitzGeralds did in fact separate.[92] This may have been because Desmond, due to a combination of work-pressure and marital strife, spent little time in his family home. Indeed, at one point during the Civil War, members of the provisional government were forced to live in Leinster House, the seat of government, due to threat of assasination. Writing to Nancy Campbell, who was strongly anti-Treaty, Mabel stated:

> Won't you come and see me or meet me in Town? If you would call here, Desmond will be away for some days more, and anyway he is *never* here in the daytime. If you don't want to call, tell me where I can see you if you know when next you will be in.[93]

Mabel did not keep her sympathies from her boys, who took their mother's side in the dispute. Pierce FitzGerald used to tell how he and his elder brother, when they found themselves eating with their father, would say to him: "Pass the salt, traitor."[94]

As a gesture to her husband, Mabel resigned from Cumann na mBan after that body's repudiation of the Treaty, yet she was pointedly absent from Cumann na Saoirse, the half-hearted women's pro-Treaty equivalent.[95] Originally more political than her husband, from this point she retired from public life altogether. Mabel continued to meet anti-Treatyites such as Nancy Campbell socially, and did nothing to hide her views. Máire Comerford later recalled: "Some [women republicans] were married to Free Staters. Mabel FitzGerald crossed the bridge very reluctantly; we continued to meet over cups of coffee in Bewley's".[96]

Mabel was in a position to offer support to the anti-Treaty side. She used her position as wife of a senior Free State minister to seek improvements in conditions for anti-Treaty prisoners in Mountjoy Gaol.[97] She also intervened with her husband to seek the release of Joseph Campbell from custody.[98] There is evidence that Mabel was responsible for reminding the authorities that executing the injured Ernie O'Malley would have borne an embarrassing resemblance to the British execution of James Connolly, strapped to a chair, after the Easter Rising.[99]

More significant are claims that Mabel passed information on government activities to the anti-Treatyites, perhaps through letters to O'Malley. Evidence of active spying by Mabel on her husband's enemies would necessitate a different interpretation of her activities during this period. Garret FitzGerald remembered that "Mabel's sympathies…were with the Republicans, although personal loyalty to and love of Desmond prevented her from taking any active part in the conflict".[100] This perhaps underestimates the turmoil suffered by Mabel, which may have caused her to pass secrets to the other side. In two 1985 interviews with

Mabel FitzGerald's grand-daughter, former anti-Treaty activist George Gilmore claimed that Mabel passed all the information she had to republican headquarters, through the conduit of Ernie O'Malley in Mountjoy Gaol. Gilmore stated: "I think it was probably Ernie himself who told me that she was giving all the help she could; she was very much on our side".[101] Mabel certainly used the underground post to contact him, which suggests that the content of the letters were – to say the least – frowned upon by the authorities.[102] However, there is no evidence of impropriety in any surviving letters. Desmond may have had some suspicions. He "felt inhibited from discussing affairs of state with her because of her lack of sympathy".[103] However, credible doubt is cast on Gilmore's assertion by both Aodogán O'Rahilly and his cousin Sighle Humphreys, both of whom stressed, as Garret FitzGerald did, that Mabel remained loyal to Desmond throughout the War, and did not deceive him.[104] Peadar O'Donnell, the republican activist, claimed in 1985 that Mabel's letters to O'Malley were focussed on discussing books, in order to cheer him up.[105] In the absence of further evidence, the case against Mabel as an anti-Treaty informant remains far from proved: although she certainly did correspond with O'Malley through unofficial channels, the content of any surviving communications is innocuous; it is possible that Gilmore's memory was faulty, or that he misinterpreted the nature of the O'Malley-Mabel FitzGerald relationship.

Evidence does suggest, however, that as late as 1925 Mabel was willing to materially aid the republicans her husband wished to incarcerate. On 27 November 1925 the IRA staged a spectacular mass breakout of prisoners from Mountjoy Gaol. George Gilmore helped organise the escape, in which nineteen prisoners broke free.[106] Sighle Humphreys, a republican activist, had been placed in charge of procuring clothing, transport and housing for the escapees. However, three more men had escaped than she had expected.

Desperate to find civilian clothes for the last escapee, she rang Mrs FitzGerald's doorbell. As Mabel, without saying a word, handed over one of Desmond's suits to disguise a man on the run from Desmond, the young Sheila suddenly realised how painful Mabel's situation was, and how her own actions had exacerbated it.[107]

Mabel remained embarrassed by her husband's compromise with British power, in particular his attendance at the 1923 Imperial Conference in London, in his capacity as minister for external affairs. Writing to Nancy Campbell in late-1923, she contrasted Nancy's husband Joseph, a Free State prisoner, with Desmond:

Everything is very rotten isn't it? The Imperial Conference is the last straw unless it weakens the national conscience in some of their supporters, and there seems little hope of that, they swallow everything. You have much to be thankful for even with Joseph in jail, my dear, at least you have cause for pride. I burn with shame at Desmond's association with the Imperial Conference and his acceptance of the Imperial Hospitalities. It is incredible to me that he should have gone: I said all I could, and denounced their conduct with all the strength of feeling I have about it, but it doesn't do a bit of good: they are impervious to national shame. I begged him not to go for my sake, if he saw nothing in it himself, that it would pile the last shame and dishonour on me and the children, but it was no good 'They had to fulfil the obligations of the Treaty, and he had to go if he was required as that was his duty'. … It sickens me anyway. [108]

During the period 1921 to 1923, Mabel FitzGerald, faced with a crisis over whether to remain with a man of opposing views, she agreed for the sake of her children to forsake public political activism entirely. However, those who knew her understood where her true allegiance lay; and she did not balk at offering support to those on the republican side.

IV

After the Civil War, Desmond had a successful career in Free State politics, remaining minister for external affairs until his appointment as minister for defence in 1927. The FitzGerald family lived in a comfortable house in Fairy Hill, Bray, and after the rigours of rebel life settled into a routine of comfortable bourgeois respectability.[109] Visitors included

W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Sarah Purser, and Oliver St. John Gogarty.[110] Time diminished the animus of the Civil War years, and Desmond and Mabel's marriage recovered. When their youngest son Garret was born in February 1926, he was nicknamed the "Child of Reconciliation".[111] The McConnells and FitzGeralds remained close, and Garret FitzGerald had fond memories of visiting his Protestant cousins and grandparents in the north.

Sadly, it seems the birth of Garret was the impetus for a nervous breakdown for Mabel FitzGerald.[112] She had always desperately wanted a daughter, and, as her correspondence shows, had suffered from a fragile state of mind since at least 1916. On giving birth to her fourth son, at the age of 41, she was devastated. Leaving the new-born Garret with her sister Memi in Bangor, County Down, she spent about three months recovering in Switzerland and the south of France. Any biographer hoping to mine this incident for psychological insights into the future Taoiseach may be disappointed. Garret FitzGerald stated, "I was an adult before I learnt of this early experience, so it had no adverse … effects!"[113]

Mabel remained a committed republican until at least the late 1920s. In a letter to Gladys Hynes in 1926, she described her pessimism that her husband's party would win the next general election, which they did. She feared the recent creation of Fianna Fáil would entail compromise by republicans, writing, "I am sure de Valera has good motives, but so had the Free Staters when they took the Treaty".[114] She continued to make her disapproval of the government clear, most publicly by refusing to accompany Desmond to formal occasions where spouses were expected. After the murder of Kevin O'Higgins, the vice-president of the executive council in 1927, O'Higgins' widow Brigid took Mabel's place at state receptions.[115] Mabel could be greatly offended by accusations of hypocrisy or a waning of her political principles. In 1927, Margaret Gavan Duffy, the wife of George Gavan Duffy the pro-de Valera barrister, alleged that Mabel had financed Desmond's trip to the 1926 Imperial

Conference in London. Hurt by this charge, Mabel responded that "If you believe … I helped Desmond go to the Imperial Conference, knowing my Republican principles, you must believe me pretty vile".[116]

However, as Mabel grew older her political opinions changed, and she slowly came to support the Free State. Kevin O'Higgins's killing by republican gunmen in July 1927 had a shattering effect not only on Desmond, his close ally, but on Mabel as well.[117] Furthermore, she came to appreciate the integrity of the Cumann na nGaedheal government; in the words of Garret FitzGerald "as a Presbyterian, integrity ranked high in her value system".[118] Republican rhetoric during the 1920s failed to impress her. As she later wrote to Hynes: "I had been on their [the republican] side because of the principle of a Republic, though all the men I admired were on the other side but I was gradually sickened by a lying propaganda against better men".[119] By the late 1920s she seems to have fully supported the Free State.[120]

In 1932 Cumann na nGaedheal were replaced in office by Eamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil. Desmond FitzGerald would never again hold cabinet office. The 1930s were a difficult time for Desmond professionally: intellectual and occasionally supercilious he was unsuited to opposition politics. Like much of his party he flirted with fascist ideas during the 1930s, despite his wife's discouragement.[121] In 1937 he lost his Dáil seat; and in the early 1940s he was greatly saddened by the deaths of his two brothers and sister. In his son's words "a rare bright spot" was Mabel's conversion to Catholicism.[122] Mabel's 1943 conversion makes her perhaps the last of her generation of Protestant republicans to do so. She would have converted earlier had it not been for her reluctance to cause pain to her Presbyterian family; the death of her mother in 1936 may have removed the last obstacle.[123] She had closely supervised her sons' Catholic religious education, and for many years had attended Mass with her family, but did not take communion.[124] She did not, however, show the same devotion that her husband did. In a letter to Desmond's friend, the Catholic philosopher Jacques

Maritain, after her conversion, she wrote, "I have, unfortunately, little conscious need of religion … I have to make it a matter of a series of efforts".[125]

The outbreak of the Second World War would bring about a further, extraordinary change in Mabel's politics. Confiding in George Bernard Shaw, she admitted that not only was she now opposed to an Irish republic, but that she was against universal adult suffrage. The letter is worth quoting at length:

> the state of Europe [has] convinced me that it was folly to try to stand alone as a separate Republic. And now the last folly of complete isolation may be committed if what is really a [de Valera] dictatorship is consolidated. A dictatorship supported by the most ignorant and unthinking whose views it voices.
>
> I have changed my own views greatly since youth. About adult suffrage, for instance. I find the masses always wrong, they seem to stand for the worst in man. Certainly not for integrity which I put first as the essential virtue in public or private life. Also I am convinced that education is necessary to the forming of views that are worth while at all, and I don't believe that the majority of people can take education. If poverty and dirt and disease could be abolished, and I hope they may be, the multitude would want more dog racing, more drink, more pictures, more tabloid views from the cheap press supplied, the only demand for more education would be for the sort of education that would get better jobs for their families, not the education that would make them think better.
>
> Adult suffrage seems to me to have led only to the supremacy of the people without standards and values, and of the half-baked educationally. Government and all control will soon be in the hands of the uneducated, or the semi-educated with the primary school outlook. They already dominate everything here and you seem to be heading for the same direction in England.[126]

Even her opinions on domestic matters had reverted to a Victorian-era standard. Her grand-daughter recalled, "The Mabel who tried to live like a peasant in Brittany and Kerry … as an older woman terrorized her daughters-in-law with inflexible standards re china and bone-handled knives".[127] Almost forty years after the republican, socialist, and suffragist Meadhbh

Ní Chonaill had left Belfast, Mabel FitzGerald exhibited the reactionary views of John McConnell.

The death of Desmond in 1947 left Mabel desolate.[128] The breach had been healed for many years, and they had enjoyed their last years together. In old age Mabel reconsidered her actions during the Civil War, and came to regret her harshness to Desmond. She told a friend:

> I never stop thinking of him; always when alone my mind goes over the past. If I could only have the time again. I need not tell you that [there] are things in myself I would wish to change then. But we had so much happiness.[129]

Possibly in partial compensation for her earlier actions, after Desmond's death Mabel came to fret that his achievements were not properly being remembered by a party that, she thought, had treated him badly:

> The boys and I remember his dignity under humiliation, that nothing ever passed his lips, & we say nothing either. No one knows I feel it. But I saw him in those later years put aside by place-hunters, and now I see [them] writing & claiming credit, and no-one remembering him.[130]

Surviving her husband by eleven years, Mabel died on 24 April 1958, six months after suffering a stroke.

V

> I was four, or perhaps just five, playing on the study floor, my mother seated near me. I made a derogatory remark about the Protestant religion of the then Vice-President of the Executive Council, Ernest Blythe. He was a close family friend of almost twenty years' standing. My mother eyed me sternly and responded quietly, "You do know that I'm a Protestant too, dear, don't you?" I didn't.

This exchange, which opens Garret FitzGerald's 1991 memoir *All in a Life,* forced the writer to note, "Life clearly was more complex than I had started to imagine".[131] The life and career of Mabel FitzGerald forces us, too, to concede quite how complex was the personal, political,

even family identity of members of the revolutionary generation. A Belfast Presbyterian who was a staunch republican, a vehement anti-Treatyite who shared her home with a Free State minister, and a nationalist who came to regret universal suffrage, Mabel FitzGerald may be seen as embodying just some of the manifold contradictions evident in this period. Her experiences demonstrate the inherent difficulties faced by rebels in seeking to reconcile strict adherence to a revolutionary programme with maintaining ordinary personal relationships on hand, and the requirement for political flexibility on the other. For Mabel, as with so many rebels, this proved an impossible task.

Notes

[1] See, for example, two important studies: Foster, *Vivid faces*; Pašeta, *Irish nationalist women*.
[2] Throughout this article the term "advanced nationalist" will be taken to mean those members of various organisations which advocated an independent Ireland, usually a republic. They are to be contrasted with constitutional nationalists, who supported the Irish Parliamentary Party, and advocated home rule for Ireland within the British Empire.
[3] Garret FitzGerald (1926-2011), elected to Seanad Éireann (1965) and Dáil Éireann (1969); minister for foreign affairs (1973-1977); leader of Fine Gael (1977-1987); Taoiseach of Ireland (1981-1982, 1982-1987). Economist, journalist and commentator.
[4] For a recent, insightful discussion of Mabel FitzGerald: see Foster, *Vivid faces*, 16, 18-19, 125, 284, 323-4.
[5] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald", text of unpublished lecture, copy in possession of author.
[6] See, for example, O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, 74-5.
[7] See, for example, Ward, *Unmanageable revolutionaries*, 281; Cruise O'Brien, *The Same Age as the State*, 74.
[8] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 20; *Dictionary of Irish Biography* entry on Desmond FitzGerald; National Archives of Ireland, Dublin (NAI), Ernest Blythe, Bureau of Military History Witness Statement (accessible online).
[9] William M. Hunter, *The Private Life of a Country Medical Practitioner, Country General Practice for over half a century, beginning at the age of 23 years* (n.d., n.p.), 21, held in Hunter Family Papers, Hollywood, Co. Down, Northern Ireland. I would like to thank the current Mr. William Hunter, the grandson of Dr. William Hunter, for granting me permission to use this document.
[10] Martin (ed.), *Leaders and men*, 99.
[11] Martin, *Leaders and men*, 99; Campbell, *The dissenting voice*, 374.
[12] Johnstone, *The vintage of memory*, 64.
[13] Moody and Beckett, *Queen's, Belfast, 1845-1949*, 370-371. See also *The Republic*, 16 May 1907.
[14] Queen's College Belfast, *The Book of the Fete*, 108.
[15] Queen's College Belfast, *The Book of the Fete*, 108; University College Dublin Archives (UCDA), Desmond FitzGerald Papers, Ms p80/1477 (1) Membership booklet for "The College Gaelic Society", 1905-06, belonging to Mabel McConnell; UCDA Ms 1477 (2) Membership booklet for "The College Gaelic Society", 1906-07, belonging to Mabel McConnell.

[16]Correspondence with Dr. Jennifer FitzGerald, in possession of the author.
[17]Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald"; Queen's College Belfast, *The Book of the Fete*, 108.
[18] Eilis N. Vesey [Lizzie N. McConnell], "Letters from Old Victorians" *The Victorian* 8 (June 1923): 30-3.
[19] Garret FitzGerald, extract from "Notes on the McConnell Family Tree" (1995, 1997, 2001), unpublished, copy in possession of author.
[20] *Gaelic Churchman*, February 1925.
[21] See Mabel FitzGerald (MFG) to George Bernard Shaw (GBS), 7 December 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising*, 195. MFG told GBS she met Roger Casement "in Belfast last Xmas at the house of Francis Joseph Bigger".
[22] UCDA, Ms P80/1465, Copy of Curriculum Vitae of Mabel McConnell; Queen's College Belfast, *Calendar of Queen's College Belfast,* Session 1907-8 (Belfast: Alex. Mayne and Boyd, 1907), 323.
[23] UCDA P80/1469 Copy of testimonial from GBS, on Mabel McConnell.
[24] UCDA P80/1476, March 1911, Mrs Nora Murray Robertson to Mabel McConnell. Robertson acted as a sort of informal assistant to George Moore.
[25] Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, 5; Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 20.
[26] Census of England and Wales, 1911, returns for family of Mary Anne FitzGerald, Forest Gate, London.
[27] Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, 18.
[28] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 20.
[29] UCDA P80/1498 [undated, 1910] Desmond FitzGerald (DFG) to MFG. For another example of clashing priorities and differing perspectives, see UCDA P80/1503, DFG to MFG, [undated, probably spring/early summer 1910].
[30] GBS to MFG, 29 January 1915, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 200.
[31] UCDA P80/1492, DFG to MFG, 10 August 1910, and P80/1496, 23 August 1910; Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, 5.
[32] UCDA P80/1492, DFG to MFG, 10 August 1910.
[33] UCDA P80/1493, DFG to MFG,15 August 1910.
[34] Garret FitzGerald, extract from "Notes on the McConnell Family Tree".
[35] Correspondence with Jennifer FitzGerald.
[36] The catalogue continues: " 'The full house of Irish love' is another Yeatsian joke. It is a phrase from a popular song of the period, 'An Agricultural Irish Girl'. Mabel McConnell was a daughter of a Belfast Unionist businessman, very far from being an 'agricultural girl' ": Adam's, Dublin, *Catalogue for Irish art auction,* held 4 December 2012.
[37] Birth certificate of "Patrice Jean Marie Desmond" (Desmond FitzGerald jnr.), registered on 20 November 1911, at commune de Saint-Jean-du-Doigt, canton de Lanmeur, arrondissement de Morlaix, copy in possession of author; Correspondence with Jennifer FitzGerald. Both parents were listed on the document. Desmond FitzGerald jnr. (d. 1987) trained as an architect, designing (1937) the terminal building at Dublin airport, and serving (1951-1969) as professor of architecture at University College Dublin.
[38] Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 23. It also formed part of a wider phenomenon of nationalists spending time in Irish-speaking districts to improve their spoken Irish.
[39] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald".
[40] NAI, Ernest Blythe, Bureau of Military History Witness Statement (accessible online).
[41] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald"; Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life*, 6.
[42] MFG, short autobiographical abstract, copy in possession of author.
[43] Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, Ulster Covenant, signature sheet 5062/27 (accessible online).
[44] MFG to DFG, 12 February 1916, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 209.
[45] MFG to GBS, 28 November 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 186.
[46] MFG to GBS, 28 November 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 186; MFG to GBS 7 December 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 193. Mabel's two brothers enlisted in the war: John Dunville McConnell likely in the British 36th Division, Villiers McConnell in the Canadian army. Éilís McConnell's husband was killed in the war. Relations between Mabel and John Dunville McConnell were strained, probably due to political differences: "He never writes me of course nor I him": MFG to DFG, 6 March 1916, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 222.
[47] MFG to GBS, 7 December 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 194. See also, UCDA, P80/1521, Robert Lynd to MFG.
[48] GBS to MFG, 29 January 1915, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 200.
[49] GBS to MFG, 12 and 13 December 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 197.
[50] MFG to GBS, 28 November 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising*, 187. Sasanach is a pejorative term for Englishman.
[51] GBS to MFG, 1 December 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 190.

[52] GBS to MFG, 12 and 13 December 1914, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 199.
[53] See *Wicklow People* October 23 1915; *Wicklow People* 30 October 1915.
[54] MFG to DFG, 22 February 1916, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 215.
[55] NAI, Claire Hobson, Bureau of Military History Witness Statement (accessible online); MFG to DFG, 7 February 1916, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 205-206; Hay, *Bulmer Hobson*, 167.
[56] UCDA P80/1660 (1), MFG, "Account of entering the Post Office on the first day of the Easter Rising". Cf. Desmond's account of that day, which states that neither parent saw their children: "I told her immediately that the Rising was fixed for that day. We rushed to the house to see the children, but they were not there. They had been taken to Mass by the friend I had asked to look after them. There was no time to wait, so we caught the next train to Dublin.": Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising*, 126.
[57] Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 133.
[58] Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising,* 140.
[59] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald". See also Trinity College Dublin Archives (TCD Archives) Joseph Campbell Papers, Ms. 10238, manuscript diary of Easter Week by Nancy Campbell. Campbell recorded that Mabel told her: "she had never any idea of seeing him alive again when she had said goodbye to him at the GPO on the Tuesday".
[60] TCD Archives, Joseph Campbell papers, Ms 10238 diary of Easter Week by Nancy Campbell.
[61] TCD Archives, Joseph Campbell papers, Ms 10238 diary of Easter Week by Nancy Campbell.
[62] TCD Archives, Joseph Campbell papers, Ms 10238 diary of Easter Week by Nancy Campbell.
[63] UCDA P80/1561 (1) unfinished draft letter from MFG to GBS, May 1916.
[64] See, for example: MFG to GBS, 23 May 1916, in Desmond FitzGerald, *Desmond's Rising*, 201-2; UCDA P80/1560 GBS to MFG, 25 May 1916; P80/1561 (1) unfinished draft letter from MFG to GBS, May 1916; P80/1577 letter from MFG to Brigadier General, Richmond Barracks, 22 May 1916; P80/1580 (1) MFG to Very Reverend William Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin, 23 May 1916; P80/1581,T.M Healy to MFG, 24 June 1916.
[65] UCDA P80/1613 (10) letter to MFG from Margaret McConnell, née Neill, 25 May 1916.
[66] UCDA P80/1625 letter, some date in 1916, probably before sentencing, Kate FitzGerald to MFG.
[67] Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, Dublin, Kathleen Lynn diary, 25 December 1917.
[68] For Brodrick, see Morrissey, "Albinia Brodrick: Munster's Anglo-Irish Republican".
[69] See TCD Archives Ms 10222, Nancy Campbell diary, 31 December 1910, 7 January 1911, 8 May 1911.
[70] McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan*, 95.
[71] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald".
[72] McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan*, 140.
[73] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 24.
[74] McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan*, 150.
[75] NAI, Vera McDonnell, Bureau of Military History Witness Statement (accessible online).
[76] Nankivell and Loch, *Ireland in Travail*, 173.
[77] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 24
[78] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald". See for example, *Irish Independent*, 12 February 1921.
[79] Nankivell and Loch, *Ireland in Travail*, 171.
[80] UCDA P80/1614(4) letter from Kate FitzGerald to MFG, 24 May 1916; Correspondence with Jennifer FitzGerald.
[81] "Loneliness", by Mabel FitzGerald, typescript copy in possession of author. The poem is dated 13 May 1920; the FitzGeralds were married in the Catholic Church of St Anselm and St Cecilia, St Giles, London on 13 May 1911: Copy of Marriage Certificate of Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald, in possession of author.
[82] UCDA P80/1635 (1) DFG to MFG February 1921.
[83] UCDA P80/1636 (4) DFG to MFG 3 April 1921
[84] Nankivell and Loch, *Ireland in Travail*, 177. It appears Mabel reserved her complaints for Desmond.
[85] Townshend, *The republic*, 362; *Irish Independent*, 6 February 1922.
[86] UCDA P80/1638 letter from MFG to Gladys Hynes, 2 March 1921.
[87] Nankivell and Loch, *Ireland in Travail*, 178.
[88] UCDA P80/1644 DFG to MFG, 24 November 1921.
[89] As Nancy Campbell related to George Gilmore: Transcript of interview with George Gilmore, by Jennifer FitzGerald, 27 May 1985. I would like to thank Dr. William Murphy for making a copy of this transcript available to me.
[90] Ernie O'Malley to MFG, 1 December 1923, in O'Malley and Dolan, *"No surrender here!"*, 449.
[91] Ernie O'Malley to MFG, 5 January 1924, in O'Malley and Dolan, *"No surrender here!"*, 477.
[92] See for example, Ward, *Unmanageable revolutionaries*, 281; Cruise O'Brien, *The Same Age as the State*, 74.
[93] TCD Archives Ms 10171/583, letter from MFG to Nancy Campbell, undated [1922-1923].

[94] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 27. Or, "Pass the salt, you bloody traitor": Cruise O'Brien, *The Same Age as the State,* 74.
[95] *Irish Times,* 18 March 1922; *Irish Times* 12 February 1923; *Dictionary of Irish Biography* entry on Desmond FitzGerald.
[96] Quoted in Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries,* 172.
[97] Ernie O'Malley to MFG, 24 November 1923, in O'Malley and Dolan, *"No surrender here!",* 410.
[98] TCD Archives, Joseph Campbell papers, Ms 10171/583, letter from MFG to Nancy Campbell, undated [late 1923].
[99] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 26; letter from Aodogan O'Rahilly, 26 April 1998, copy in possession of author.
[100] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald".
[101] Transcript of interview with George Gilmore, by Jennifer FitzGerald, 27 May 1985; Notes on interview with George Gilmore, by Jennifer FitzGerald, 11 March 1985, copies in possession of author.
[102] Ernie O'Malley to MFG, 24 November 1923, in O'Malley and Dolan, *"No surrender here!",* 410; Ernie O'Malley to MFG, 1 December 1923, in O'Malley and Dolan, *"No surrender here!",* 449; Ernie O'Malley to MFG, 10 December 1923, in O'Malley and Dolan, *"No surrender here!",* 465.
[103] Garret FitzGerald, *All in a life,* 11. An alternative construction is that Desmond trusted his wife with privileged information, but wished to avoid the domestic acrimony that would arise from discussing it with her. See also Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 27.
[104] Communicated by Aodogán O'Rahilly and Sighle Humphreys to Jennifer FitzGerald, 1985. I would like to thank Dr. FitzGerald for making her notes on this matter available to me.
[105] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 26.
[106] McConville, *Irish political prisoners 1920-1962,* 282, 296; Hanley, *The IRA, 1926-1936,* 192; Carey, *Mountjoy,* 224.
[107] Jennifer FitzGerald, "Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald", 27.
[108] TCD Archives, Joseph Campbell papers, Ms 10171/583, letter from MFG to Nancy Campbell, undated [October-November 1923].
[109] In 1937 Desmond and Mabel sold Fairy Hill, and spent about a year in Blackrock, and about six years in Temple Road, Rathgar. In 1945 they moved to a rented flat in Airfield House, Donnybrook.
[110] Garret FitzGerald, *All in a life,* 18.
[111] Garret FitzGerald, *All in a life,* 18; Cruise O'Brien, *Same age as the state,* 74.
[112] Transcript of interview with George Gilmore, by Jennifer FitzGerald, 27 May 1985.
[113] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald".
[114] UCDA P80/1654 Letter from MFG to Gladys Hynes, 13 September 1926
[115] As communicated by Una O'Higgins O'Malley to Jennifer FitzGerald: Correspondence with Jennifer FitzGerald.
[116] UCDA P80/1655 letter from MFG to Mrs [Margaret] Gavan Duffy, 31 May 1927.
[117] See UCDA P80/1656 letter from MF to Brigid O'Higgins, July 1927, offering sympathies on her husband's death. At the time of O'Higgins' death Desmond, recently appointed Minister for Defence, was gravely ill after an appendicitis operation that went wrong. Garret FitzGerald wrote: "At this moment, tragedy struck. Kevin O'Higgins, the colleague my father most admired after the deaths of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins…was assassinated on his way to Mass by a breakaway IRA group. To prevent my father hearing the news – which in his condition could have caused him to lose the will to live – my mother spent every day from early morning until late at night at his bedside. At one point, hearing military aircraft overhead – the flypast during the funeral – he recalled his new role as Minister for Defence and demanded to know what they were doing": Garret FitzGerald, *All in a life,* 9-10.
[118] Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald".
[119] UCD P80/1693, MFG to Gladys Hynes 29 May 1957.
[120] Garret FitzGerald, extract from "Notes on the McConnell Family Tree".
[121] *Dictionary of Irish Biography* entry on Desmond FitzGerald.
[122]Garret FitzGerald, "Desmond – and Mabel – FitzGerald".
[123] Correspondence with Jennifer FitzGerald.
[124] Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life,* 1.
[125] Quoted in Foster, *Vivid faces,* 323. Mabel did, however, leave money in her will for Masses for her soul to be said in public in the Church of the Sacred Heart in Donnybrook after her death: UCDA P80/1710, Copy of will of MFG.
[126] UCDA P80/1664 letter from MFG to GBS 26 May 1944. Adult suffrage had been introduced in the Irish Free State in 1922.
[127] Jennifer FitzGerald quoted in Foster, *Vivid faces,* 323.

[128] It also left her in a financially precarious position: on his death Desmond left to Mabel an estate (mostly comprised of the balance of his ministerial and military service pensions) amounting to about £145, as well as liabilities amounting to about £500: Military Archives, Dublin, Military Service Pensions Collection, REF 34D2179, file relating to Desmond FitzGerald [accessible online].
[129] MFG to Kathleen McKenna Napoli, 24-25 March 1950, transcripts in possession of author.
[130] MFG to Kathleen McKenna Napoli, 6 April 1950, transcripts in possession of author.
[131] Garret FitzGerald, *All in a Life,* 1.

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