

# Racial Prejudice and Marginalisation of the Irish Female Migrants in *The Irish Girl in America* by Mary Anne Sadlier through the Standpoint Theory

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on *The Irish Girl in America* (1863) by the Irish author, Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903), who composed under the alias "J. Sadlier". Her narratives are set against the cultural landscape of The Great Potato Famine (1845-1849) and depict the existence of Irish female transients of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, which we contend is as yet understudied and overlooked in the educational curve on works of writing on the Irish female character. This is notwithstanding how authentic archives point out how the Irish female characters assisted with causing progressive acknowledgment of the Irish female outsiders' presence. We hypothesise that the abstract portrayals of the Irish female migrants can be examined in *The Irish Girl in America* by Sadlier by zeroing how they accomplish advantaged stances as untouchables from inside the local host area. By utilising a hermeneutic, textual analysis, we centre around the author's portrayals of the encounters of the slow arousing of the Irish female heroes by using "the stance hypothesis" by Sandra Harding (1986). Consequently, this study investigates the awareness for a self-definition through specific and aggregate degrees of accomplishing a "standpoint" experienced by the Irish female protagonists. Our findings uncover how the Irish female migrant characters can perform advantaged points of view and acknowledgment in their new local area.

**Keywords:** Irish Female Migrant Character, Mary Anne Sadlier, Standpoint Theory, The Irish Girl in America

## Introduction: Is there a Standpoint for Female Migrant Characters?

This paper analyses the accomplishment of Bessy, an Irish settler, the female protagonist in *The Irish Girl in America* (1863) written by the female Irish author, Mary Anne Sadlier (1820-1903), under the alias "J. Sadlier", set during The Great Potato Famine (1845-

1849). In this study, we apply the standpoint theory by the American feminist and post-colonialist theorist, Sandra Harding (b. 1935); focusing on the stance interaction, to examine how the racial bias against the Irish female migrant characters and the female protagonist, Bessy, who have migrated to America, reflect the author's own outsider encounters being uncertain and displaced among places and societies.

As conceptualised by Harding, we hypothesise that Sadlier's portrayal of Bessy, the Irish female outsider protagonist, who does not have a position within the American culture or her home people, goes through strides of accomplishing standpoint: looking for a stance, looking for an area, sharing the angle. This methodology will permit us to relate the outlook experience of the protagonist, on a more extensive cultural level, to their linkages. The analyses, likewise, allow for a critical view of Sadlier's illustrations of Irish female foreigners' change and individuality. The Irish female protagonist, Bessy, does not demonstrate a straightforward personality. In *The Irish Girl in America*, Bessy attempts to associate her life with the remainder of the Irish migrant female characters in the text. All in all, this novel explores the themes and issues of independence and all-inclusiveness. Bessy, here, shows what the prejudice against Irish migrant females means for the feminine charismas and their family.

In current debates and scholarship, female issues and concerns, for the most part, have been the subject matter of various scholarly examinations; for instance, the issue of Irish outsiders' lives and customary Catholic Beliefs Peters et al (2009); Fanning et al (2000); O'Keefe et al (2013), public personality Giammanco et al (2010); Van Os et al (2019) and the feelings of depression and weakness (Giammanco et al., 2010). Interestingly, different examinations have given primary consideration to the anecdotal depictions of the Great Potato Famine (King et al., 2006; Corporaal et al., 2009). O'Keefe, for example, additionally focuses on the issue of female personality with regards to Catholicism and the male-centric culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century O'Keefe (2013) and the compelling force of the Great Potato Famine to refresh the narrative of the Irish female migrants, which provides them a feeling of pride of their foundations. This, at that point, brings about the development of categorical Irish ladies who are generally involved in a dangerous position. In our analyses, these female Irish anecdotal characters have been portrayed as solid, developed and autonomous with interesting viewpoints in Irish and American social orders. Significant inquiries in this manner, thus, need to be addressed: are these Irish female characters minimised inside their local area? Have the Irish female characters encountered the accomplishment of one kind of stance? Have they opposed defeating social abuse?

### **The Lived Experiences of Irish Women Prior to Migration**

As we focus on Irish female migrants living in America, it is essential to discuss and provide an insight into their lived encounters. The Great Potato Famine was a period of plague; with lack of food, forced migration and incredible appetite in Ireland. During these destitute years, over 1,000,000 individuals died and more than 2,000,000 were displaced. Therefore, Irish settlers had to look for another home to survive, where many relocated to Canada, America and Great Britain. This great starvation was brought about by an affliction, which harmed potato crops in Ireland during the famine in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Hoare, "The Black Potatoes" 35). The affliction caused a great calamity as Ireland was one of three nations in the world which depended on potatoes for political and financial reasons. Alongside the affliction, scholars have posited the view that the British Corn Laws and the ranch land lease

in Ireland contributed massively to the calamity. All through the Great Potato Famine, a great number of female Irish women escaped to America with their community.

In a notable study, *Women and The Great Hunger* (2013), edited by King, Reilly and Kinealy, the scholars seek to move the focus away from male chronicled topic and concentrate harder on female encounters during the Great Potato Famine in Ireland. This study reveals the less recognised and the implicit accounts of Irish female migrants' jobs during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and provides substantial consideration to various endeavours that Irish ladies were associated with. Rather than the recently referenced negative images of the Irish women as aloof characters, this study highlights the jobs of these women as the makers of the way of life of the Great Potato Famine.

In addition, this study also focuses on revealing Irish female endeavours instead of utilising a philosophy to examine the plight of the women and their monetary status. In "Nearly Starved to Death", Reilly demonstrates how these women, who assumed significant roles in portraying Irish females as solid and dynamic, attempted to conduct workshops to help these destitute women how to make fabrics in order to financially support themselves. For instance, McConnell provides a transoceanic account of two young women who set up their work to help Irish vagrant youngsters during the starvation period.

### **Mary Anne Sadlier and *The Irish Girl in America***

As discussed earlier, Sadlier was an ally of Irish working women. Her accounts were responses to the existing issues of her time as well as the Great Potato Famine, British mistreatment of Irish ranchers and young Irish women in their country, and the oppression of Catholicism. More significantly, Sadlier narrates the stories of the women's activist issues in her accounts. Her narratives, likewise, could be viewed as a record of Catholicism as we will discuss about her life in part two. Sadlier's *The Irish Girl in America* is about Bessy Conway, an Irish Girl who leaves Ireland and fills in as a worker for one of the American families. In this novel, Bessy is a young lady brimming with negativity, where she moves to help her family, working to acquire a little pay at administration in America. Fearlessly, she experiences the negative aspects of social classes and never surrenders to her principal objectives. Sadlier features the significance of the family's inside power structure in the Irish worker women's lives.

Additionally, the external forces structures impacted the family, similar to the British policy, and the local area in America. Irish interloper women's relocation choice depended on family choice (Fanning), where the female characters accept that their works in the American market have empowered them to help their families financially. Sadlier's double-dealing of the flight scene of Bessy and other Irish migrant female characters shows this situation:

Away and away, she goes, the harbor is cleared, boisterous from shore rises the splitting cry of distress from the horde of companions and family members. The reverberation comes back from the boat, a pitiful, wild theme, where numerous voices blend. Messages to companions in America are for the last time shouted to those ready, directives to compose when they landed, and every one of the late final words with which warmth looks to draw out the intercourse that will before the long stop, maybe perpetually (9). These women offered their lives to their relatives, where they proposed joining the work market in America to bring in cash and assist their helpless families in Ireland at the hour of the Great Potato Famine. The movement of the Irish foreign women did not halt the family association.

Sadlier's portrayal of the American milieu recommends negativity about Irish-American lives in America; "[m]aybe in the immense degree of the edified world, there is no class more

presented to underhanded impacts than the Irish Catholic young ladies who make money at administration in America” (Bessy Conway, iii-iv). Through Bessy, Sadlier depicts the straightforward laborer young ladies of Ireland; she had been drawn to see the new world and serve an ocean chief’s better half in New York. She went from Ireland with different workers and a few companions from home to New York. On the transport board, she got nauseous, and there was a rainstorm as the boat moved from Ireland headed for America. Sadlier portrays female characters having their eyes filled with tears and their fantasies about landing positions would blur. They thought that the vast penance of leaving their families was precious, and nothing would reimburse them. On the leading body of the boat, Henry Herbert, Lord Conway’s child, plans a union with Bessy and admits his desire for her. She rebuffs his intention to wed him and advises that her folks would not endorse him because he has distinctive conviction. After showing up in New York, Sadlier shows how the social battles are reflected in Irish-American immigrant girls. Bessy’s getting back is an image of a fruitful Irish migrant young lady who never lost her Catholic confidence who returned to the country and protected her family during the Great Potato Famine’s horrendous years.

There have been few noteworthy studies on Sadlier’s works of fiction. A notable study by Yvonne O’Keeffe, *Mary Anne Sadlier’s Emigrant Narratives, 1850-1870* (2013), is, thus far, one which examines the plight of the Irish displaced person ladies in Sadlier’s work. In her study, O’Keeffe investigates the social developments of identity, ethnicity and authoritarian personality in literary portrayals of Irish ladies wanderer encounters by analysing textual evidences from Sadlier’s stories to applicable archives of the period that address the meaning of Catholicism and the Irish families’ displacement and portrayals in America. Focussing on abstract portraits of Sadlier’s wanderer stories, O’Keeffe fosters a different translation of the viewpoint of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century ladies displaced characters who are habitually missing from significant bits of writing and original books. Given abstract portrayals in Sadlier’s migrant stories, she fosters a further comprehension of the encounters of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century ladies exiled characters who are likewise regularly missing from outstanding works of writing and recorded books. Her study has accentuated, among different angles, the meaning of Sadlier’s commitment to the advancement of an Irish-American distinguishing community while zeroing in on the ethnic settings and social parts of her work.

The examination on Sadlier’s works assists in increasing academic space for literary critics and theorists to investigate new research problems or examine the scholarly depictions of the Irish resettlement. Consequently, in this paper, we set out to venture on an additional investigation in the current research debates initiated by past researchers; for example, Os Van, Janelle Peters and Rosamaria Giammanco, by analysing critically Sadlier’s works. These insightful examinations, that have effectively been conducted in social and verifiable sociologies, shed a little but important light on Irish resettlement writings. The abstract gathering of Irish resettlement, be that as it may, is a field that is simply beginning to open up to academic investigation. Until this point, no complete insightful examination on the scholarly depictions of the Irish female experience with regards to the feeling of displacement in North America has been done. The historical backdrop of prior Irish exiled female characters has been mainly overlooked because of the lack of essential authentic records identified with their lives.

Our paper, in this way, endeavours to contribute more to the current research and debates on Irish female displaced writers and diasporic composing. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Sadlier did not participate in the women’s activist development due to the absence of political discussions. She was, instead, occupied with women’s activist

issues by organising female gatherings at her home. She also recorded the encounters of Irish female evacuees by composing early before introducing the more remarkable British women's activist author, (Woolf, 1882-1941).

### **Methodology and Conceptual Framework**

The novel, *The Irish Girl in American* (1861), by Sadlier, gives a difference meaning to prevailing English talks on Irish female foreigners regarding the boundless assessment of the Irish as apathetic and filthy. These generalisations were spread in the magazines, cartoons, and paper; for instance, in Thomas Nast Kid's Shows (189). In any case, *The Irish Girl in American* portrays the genuine narrative of Irish female outsiders and the advancement of their awareness close to home, social and political levels, which is best investigated by Harding's characters. We will primarily contend that everyone, when Irish female workers arrived in North America, was persecuted, minimised and confronted with a forceful gathering.

### **Achieving a Standpoint**

Prior to continuing to how to accomplish a standpoint, this paper looks at the important idea of viewpoint. Consideration is paid to Harding's initial practical investigation and the improvement of her methodological structure. In 1986, Harding published her first book, *The Science Question in Feminism*. In this book, she clarifies her hypothesis, the feminist standpoint, where she alludes back to the foundations of her thoughts as she states that the viewpoint begins in Hegel's contemplating the connection between the slave and the master (Harding, 26). Momentarily, this proposition contends that the men's overwhelming situation in the public arena prompts twisted understandings, while the ladies' oppressed position gives them serious understanding.

The slave driver contention of Hegel, whom Harding was motivated by to speculate on the outlook hypothesis of the angle of underestimated ladies as a piece of day-by-day educational experience, assisted Harding with zeroing in on its significance of social design upkeep in general public after some time. Her ideas centre around the importance that the encounters of an underestimated or an abused gathering produce more open records of the social request than the records of a general conference. As she expresses, "[i]n any case, imagined that gets going from every one of these various types of lives can produce less halfway and misshaped records of nature and public activity" (Harding, 1993, 65). These minimised ladies can comprehend the standpoint of others over a prevailing gathering. The overall mass has fewer motivations to understand the position and the existence of underestimated ladies. These underestimated ladies experience plenty of issues in their lives, such as monetary and social issues. Consequently, the standpoint hypothesis relies upon underestimated ladies, individual and what the individuals have encountered that delivered their insights and how the individuals feel in specific conditions.

Through clarifying the accomplishment of angle, it is critical to feature the relation among viewpoint and area. As Harding proposes, everyone in the universe has an area and she characterises the area as our space in the universe: this space where we encounter and see the universe. She contends that everyone's area is remarkable since everybody sees and unexpectedly experiences the universe. Thus, an outlook is a way that we see the universe from our area. Subsequently, everybody is extraordinary and unique since we see and unexpectedly encounter the universe. Harding's hypothesis empowers us as specialists to

examine Sadlier's literary works and her anecdotal characters by maturing their lives' social and political comprehensions.

## Discussion

### Achieving a Standpoint of Bessy

Bessy, the Irish female hero, goes through stages and advances typically for viewpoint minimised to accomplish an exciting outlook. Accordingly, we contend that Bessy, an underestimated female protagonist, encounters double presence among the Irish and American societies, and her absence of one character, or what we can consider her bifurcated personality, prepares her to accomplish an exciting angle. At last, she can educate and pass her encounters to other Irish female foreign workers to adapt to their new home. She pays for her battles and needs to impart her encounters to her own underestimated group, Irish female outsider workers. Here, her outlook is being created alongside her estrangement. In the long run, we see her encouraging other Irish female migrant workers to reconnect with their families in their country. Sadlier's *The Irish Girl in America* gives both scholars and critics a chance to investigate how history records and subtleties assist with causing progressive acknowledgment of the Irish female settlers' presence.

This novel depicts that the Great Potato Famine was essential for the Irish female migrants as it added to their experience of "continuous arousing" (MacCurtain 46). They became more mindful of their instructive requirements, financial misfortune, social conditions and living longer. David Fitzpatrick states that Irish female outsiders who emigrated after the Great Potato Famine were bold and solid people, and that the ladies' motivations for leaving Ireland originated from a craving to give better lives to their family (Fitzpatrick, 58). In the novel, Bessy accepts that the Irish female settlers imagined that their work in America could uphold them in order to improve their families' income. In *The Irish Girl in America*, where the movement act is nitty-gritty from Ireland, Sadlier builds solid female characters with financial needs to leave Ireland. Sadlier is advancing for the Irish female workers to look for a spot, or space, in the Introduction of the novel:

Had been for the most part embraced and did, [it] may have been of boundless advantage to a vast number of the Irish race by eliminating them from the stuffed urban areas of our Atlantic seaboard to more secure, quieter, and more refreshing quests for horticultural life, regardless of whether on the grinning grasslands of the West or by the great waters of the North. (iii)

Sadlier knew about the political strain and delicate history between British colonisation and Ireland. The Irish female worker heroes which Sadlier portrays, the wanderer lady, having been separated from their family in Ireland, as Bessy, in the long run recreates her total nuclear family as far as her kin in the host country through chain movements. Sadlier, as portrayed through the anecdotal character, Bessy, supports the Irish female migrants to reinforce their confidence, Catholicism and to conquer the difficulties of movement, by giving "moral" structure.

In the Introduction of the novel, Sadlier depicts the challenges that confronted migrants with regards to keeping their confidence when living within an enemy of the Catholic culture. Sadlier pairs contrary energies and presents Ireland as a land where prudence and religion are society's premises (18) As stressed earlier, in this paper, we focus on an examination of Bessy, the primary heroin, in *The Irish Girl in America*, where Bessy gives a skeleton framework of the cycles in which a viewpoint is refined and accomplished. As an Irish female settler, Bessy, the heroin we accept, has a unique angle that permits us to see objective factors that

are not clear to someone who has a place with a non-underestimated group or extraordinary gatherings. We will investigate Bessy's stance as it creates and changes through her trade-off encounters. Her situation, as a young Irish settler lady, entangles her feeling of having a place with a particular gathering of people. Bessy battles to enhance her character yet her absence of personality security considers changing and different points of view, which disclose to each other and offer a critical comprehension of the Irish female migrants' circumstances in America. Additionally, we will investigate Sadlier's depictions of the strain between the underestimated and the non-minimised gatherings.

At this point in our analysis, we propose that Bessy is an Irish female transient yet, being Irish from a helpless family and female in itself, neither sums up her life nor depicts her standpoint. In *The Irish Girl in America*, Bessy attempts to interface her life with the remainder of the Irish female settlers in the novel. All in all, this novel depicts independence and all-inclusiveness where Bessy shows what bigotry means for the female characters and their family. Harding contends that the difference between a viewpoint from an autonomous perspective is "the way toward acquiring from the experience of a substantial and philosophical abuse a basic knowledge about the predominant gathering, its establishments, practices, and culture" ("Identifying" 141). Additionally, in *The Irish Girl in America*, Bessy acts as a house servant who constantly faces enormous challenges and notices her mysterious circumstances. She migrated to her new home, American, a humanised world, and fills in as a house cleaner for an American family.

It is this principal anguish that befalls upon the family when Bessy continues tolerating the enticing offer which would empower her to "see the world":

For years long that had been the fantasy of her young heart, ay! since the time the times of her adolescence, and although she would not decidedly resist her folks, and abandon their consent, she gave them clearly to comprehend that she could never be glad except if they gave it. Under that tension, the old couple had to surrender. Reluctantly they did as such. The world was blessing them at that point, they were mollified and cheerful themselves, and they couldn't identify with the adoration for change that had agitated their girl's brain (*The Irish Girl in America*, 9).

Bessy is portrayed as simple young lady who needs to travel and does not consider her family's sentiments pertaining to her ambition. She cannot envision life in the new world and the challenges that she will face; for example, bigotry and dialects issues. Her perspective on the world is loaded with lovely dreams and she is not ready to show compassion for her family. As she encounters life in the new world, her standpoint is set up and created; Bessy finds a new line of work at an American family's home. She anticipates a situation in the house of her employers, an American ocean commander, and his better half skipper Walters and Mrs. Walters, that they will embrace her in the family setting. Even though Bessy and her employers agree that there is an agreeable environment that helps and refines Bessy's comprehension of her employers' perspectives, she has never been considered one of them, an individual as part of her employers' family. She stays a settler, the Irish worker, and this mirrors her social status and pedigree as seen in the excerpt below:

"Bessy!" said she, "I have news for you."

"All things considered, ma'am! I trust it's uplifting news."

"That I can't say," answered Mrs. Walters with a grin; "I'm returning home one month from now, Bessy! – I have recently had a letter from the Captain – he desires to be here in about fourteen days from now, and I am to get back with him when he goes." Bessy's face developed bright red, at that point exceptionally pale; her lips shuddered, and her eyes loaded up with tears. After attempting on more than one occasion to talk, however without progress, she made a sound as if to speak a few times and finally wavered out: "Well! Mrs. Walters dear, I'm sorry to learn it – for sure I am, from my heart out!" and she almost burst into tears, and covered her face with her hands (*The Irish Girl in America*, 138).

Her escort laid her hand mercifully on her shoulder and said in a voice that did not liberate her from feeling:

"I realize you are heartbroken, my poor Bessy! What's more, to be sure, I am sorry to abandon you, for it could be well before I get another to suit me as you did. In any case, I was unable to anticipate that you should return with me; since you are here, obviously, you will stay to attempt your fortune. I have no uncertainty at everything except you will progress admirably" (*The Irish Girl in America*, 138).

As seen through the discussion above, Bessy notes the absence of battle as experienced by Mrs. Walter and her significant other's lives; anything they desire, they are effortlessly satisfied and get access as well. Her employers think of her as a migrant, with limited resources and will never be a part of their family. She understands that the family, whom she considers as her family, is not her family. Her standpoint right now changes and her consciousness is developing. All in all, her internal identity assists her with knowing what her identity is. Henceforth, the initial step to accomplishing a standpoint is mindfulness as it is addressed through Bessy's character.

Bessy's knowledge of Mrs. Walter accentuates the absence of battle and she realises that her employers are, as of now, mindful of her battles for personality and social situations as Mrs. Walter says, "However, I was unable to anticipate that you should return with me..." (*The Irish Girl in America*, 138). They are aware that Bessy and other Irish female foreign workers advanced towards New York as the Great Potato Famine came to Ireland. Consequently, Bessy, who encounters the distance between white American and Irish female foreign workers, accomplishes an interesting viewpoint. Bessy's double presence among Irish and American societies, her absence of one character, or what we can consider her bifurcated personality, prepares her to accomplish a novel standpoint. In the long run, she can educate and pass her encounters to other Irish female foreign workers on their quest to adapt to their new home. She begins to set aside cash and encourages other Irish female worker workers to do likewise. However, she is rejected and her employment terminated by her employers, who leave for Europe. They have, sadly, abandoned her. She pays for her life battles and needs to impart her encounters to her own minimised community, the Irish female settler workers. Her outlook is created alongside her estrangement from her host society. Ultimately, we see her encouraging other Irish female foreign workers to reconnect with their families in their country.

Along these lines, as an inferior member of the family, Bessy can condemn Mr. Walters and Mrs. Walters' financial and political status, just as their social collaborations. Bessy is generally mindful of the extravagant way of life of her employers. For Bessy, these extravagances include material, individual and political elements:



“A short time after Bessy slipped to the kitchen and was shocked to see by and large present worked up. Cook, housemaid, and medical attendant were talking as loud as possible, while wash, the hued man, sat smiling in a corner getting a charge out of the fun” (*The Irish Girl in America*, 71).

Bessy, in experiencing these sorts of extravagances, inadvertently accomplishes a stance. In other words, Bessy’s initial experiences have changed with a more extensive political and social arrangements; maybe the best clear bits of knowledge Bessy creates is her anxiety of her employers’ characters. An illustration of Bessy, as an accomplished settler, is her advice her to her Tipperary neighbours that “a large number of young Irish ladies in New York” have lost their Catholic confidence as an immediate outcome “of their going out alone to America, with no one to prompt or direct them, and them falling into terrible spots at the absolute first”. Her splitting counsel is to “[k]eep your young ladies at home if you can live here, so can they, and you'll see it better over the long haul”.

### Conclusion

It is essential to note that, even though Bessy emigrates to America against the background of the Great Potato Famine, she enjoys adequate freedom to foster her standpoint and acknowledges who she is as an Irish female. This young female character thus begins to help her family. Although Bessy, at the asking, upholds her family monetarily with her saved American wages, right off the bat, she is portrayed as being “self-centered” in her motivations to venture out from home. Overall, the portrayals of young ladies as “self-centered” are a defining moment for Irish female settlers who, up until this period, have been, to a great extent, portrayed as unselfish in their deeds for family and country. Sadlier builds a personality who is capable of accomplishing an interesting viewpoint.

In applying Harding’s stance hypothesis, Bessy speaks from the space of political obstruction. We found how she notices and endeavours to comprehend others’ life experiences. In any case, Bessy does not permit these different areas to adjust her own; Bessy takes into consideration the smoothness that ought to exist among her and her local areas, which produces various outlooks. Bessy speaks about her situations without focusing on the others, who are not from the similar social and cultural backgrounds as she is. At last, we see Bessy ready to comprehend her situation as an untouchable and figure out how to instruct and pass her encounters to other Irish female foreigner workers to adapt to their new home.

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