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Clíona Rattigan. *"What Else Could I Do?" Single Mothers and Infanticide, Ireland 1900-1950.* Dublin: Irish Academic Press. 288 pp. $79.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7165-3139-5.

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"What Else Could I Do? " Single Mothers and Infanticide, Ireland 1900-1950 is, as the title suggests, concerned with the personal and social ramifications of infanticide in early twentieth-century Irish contexts. It aims to provide a narrative that encompasses not only the intimate emotional experience of mothers who, for whatever reasons, chose to murder their newly born offspring, but also pays close attention to figures who are often at the periphery of historical attention, such as the father, family, and local community. Rattigan's account is unsurprisingly grim. The reader encounters illegitimate love being consummated in deserted fields; domestic servants being seduced, and even raped, by their employers; detectives scouring local communities for signs of illegitimate pregnancies; unmarried mothers bearing the socio-psychological scars of local gossip and media reportage; and families turning against one another as personal secrets transmuted into communal knowledge. These personal circumstances are all set against the desolate backdrop of a nation profoundly uncomfortable with its sexuality, intensifying religious and social objections to (and policies against) premarital sex and contraception, overwhelming poverty, and an ever-encroaching Catholic-led social conservatism that did little to increase sympathy towards unmarried pregnant women, not to mention the social ramifications of an island split into two during the time frame in question.

The study draws upon the previously unmined judicial records of over three hundred infanticide cases tried at the higher courts in Ireland between 1900 and 1950. Its chronological time span is important as it allows for cross-analysis of the treatment of infanticide cases in the "Two Irelands," and the impact of different legislative measures with which to tackle the problem of women murdering their young offspring. Rattigan's study is divided into five discrete thematic chapters covering the general profile of mothers accused or convicted of infanticide; familial responses; sexual attitudes; police and communal detection; and sentencing. Rattigan has meticulously picked through sources such as police reports in order to reconstruct the personal, experiential aspects of infanticide. Yet her concern rests not only with the accused mother. Rattigan also seeks to bring figures such as the fathers of murdered illegitimate children back into the picture, revealing how men responded to pregnancy and infant murder in multifaceted ways. Some men wished to marry their pregnant partners, others absconded, while some were active participants in the harrowing act of murdering their offspring. Whilst most were of the same age group as the mother, others might be elderly employers or relatives alleged to have made use of familial or work power relations to persuade, or force, the soon-to-be mother into sexual acts. Families, too, are shown to have either colluded with mothers in the killing of illegitimate infants, chosen to raise illegitimate children as their own, or, at worst, turned their back entirely on the unfortunate mother. Of course, the mother herself is also central to Rattigan's account. Through analysis of police and legal records, combined with journalistic coverage, Rattigan reveals how the private world of the accused female became grossly misrepresented as her voice became lost in the forums of police interrogation, media coverage, and courtroom grilling.

Infanticide, and opinions towards it, often took on peculiar, unique forms in Irish contexts, which heightens the historiographical value of this study. For instance, an accused mother might find herself dispatched to a Magdalen Laundry. Meanwhile, the island becomes partitioned midway through the period, with the Republic of Ireland becoming increasingly dominated by conservative attitudes towards sexuality and unmarried motherhood in a way that other countries subject to histor-

ical inquiry into infanticide did not. Furthermore, unmarried pregnancies often occurred in small towns and intimate rural settings, an outcome that enables Rattigan to provide an account of infanticide history that is less connected to processes of industrialization and urban poverty than other existing studies. *What Else Could I Do?* bears the hallmarks of doctoral studies, which suggests that the transition from thesis to monograph could have been smoother in some regards, particularly in terms of prose and structure. However, the attention to detail is remarkable, whilst the subject matter is resonant with concerns about past attitudes towards sexuality and pregnant unmarried women that continue to trouble Ireland today. In academic terms, *What Else Could I Do?* not only contributes productively to modern Irish social history, but also provides an account that enriches historical understandings of cultures of death, female criminality, motherhood and childhood, familial relations, and legal and gender histories. Furthermore, it complements pre-existing studies of unmarried motherhood in Ireland that have often focused upon the representations of murdering mothers in popular discourse, and the responses of the church and Irish state to the "unmarried mother question."

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