SINÉAD MOYNIHAN

"Like a Homing Bird to Its Nest": Irish Writers and Mid-Century U.S. Magazines

In March 1954 the Irish writer, cook, and radio personality Maura Laverty wrote to her U.S. agent Helen Strauss at the William Morris Agency. Explaining that she enjoyed personal connections with the editors of particular U.S. magazines, Laverty requested that she continue to send stories directly to those editors rather than through Strauss. In the letter Laverty uses a particularly suggestive turn-of-phrase:

> There are a few markets in America on which I have concentrated. Occasionally, I write something which I feel is tailored for them—and, sure enough, when I send it off, it wings straight to their pages like a homing bird to its nest. The editors concerned are my very good friends—Betty Finnin of "Woman's Day," Father Ralph Gorman of "The Sign," Anne Einselen of "the [Ladies' Home] Journal."[1]

Laverty's framing of a given story as "a homing bird" winging its way to a U.S. magazine nest raises provocative questions about how we conceive of Irish literature published beyond the borders of the nation-state. How are we to theorize work written by home-based Irish writers primarily for U.S. readers? How are we to understand the ways in which Irish writers exploited the commercial possibilities of their work in a U.S. marketplace? The history of mid-twentieth-century Irish literature might look very different indeed if reoriented around a "home" comprised of the pages of U.S. magazines.

1. Maura Laverty (hereafter ML) to Helen Straus [sic], 29 March 1954 (MS 50,678/18, Maura Laverty Papers, National Library of Ireland, Dublin [hereafter cited as MLP, NLI]). All quotations from the Maura Laverty Papers are reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

This article focuses on Laverty's relationship with *Woman's Day*, a "store-distributed" monthly magazine sold exclusively at the A&P (The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company) grocery stores in the United States. Alongside British and American writers such as Mary Norton, Rumer Godden, Shirley Jackson, and Dodie Smith, Laverty was one of the magazine's most prolific contributors of fiction in the mid-twentieth century, publishing nineteen stories and an autobiographical essay in its pages between 1949 and 1958. Other Irish writers who appeared in *Woman's Day* include Elizabeth Bowen, Frank O'Connor, and Bryan Mahon.[2]

I read Laverty's *Woman's Day* stories in the context of changes in the art of homemaking occurring in the decades after World War II—particularly in relation to domestic purchasing and preparation of food. Social historians note how the rise of labor-saving appliances and convenience foods in the United States was accompanied by doubts that they "could really deliver on their promises of freedom."[3] Laverty's stories of Irish village life, many of which link romance with food consumption, thus enabled *Woman's Day* readers to partake in a fantasy of "old-fashioned" homemaking. Yet as this Irish author skillfully negotiated the tensions that animated the postwar U.S. kitchen, her fiction neither eschewed convenience nor expressed disdain toward readers who took domestic shortcuts.

In making the above argument, I draw attention to the truly heterogeneous U.S. venues in which mid-century Irish writers placed their work. The relationships that Frank O'Connor, Maeve Brennan, and Mary Lavin enjoyed with the *New Yorker* magazine—along with, to a lesser extent, Brian Friel, Benedict Kiely, and John McGahern—continue to attract scholarly attention.[4] Heather Ingman notes that

2. Betty Finnin also solicited a story from Brian Moore. Moore noted in his diary on 6 August 1959 that "Betty Finnin editor of Woman's Day wrote she liked 'Grieve' and would like a story from me." See Brian Moore Papers, Folder 3, Box 26 (Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin).

3. See, for example, Harvey Levenstein, quoted in Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," *Journal of Social History* 32:3 (1999): 536.

4. On O'Connor, see James D. Alexander, "Frank O'Connor in *The New Yorker*, 1945–1967," *Éire-Ireland* 30:1 (1995): 130–44, and Michael Steinman, ed., *The Happiness of Getting It down Right: Letters of Frank O'Connor and William Maxwell, 1945–1966* (New York: Knopf, 1996). On Brennan, see Angela Bourke, *Maeve Brennan: Homesick at the New Yorker* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), and several works by Ellen

"the number of Irish writers published with the magazine raises the question of the extent to which the editorial policies of the *New Yorker* affected the shape of the Irish short story during this period."[5] The *New Yorker*, however, was just the tip of the iceberg, for an exponential growth in Irish writers' contributions to a wide variety of U.S. magazines occurred between 1940 and 1970. From the pulps (*Argosy*) to the so-called "smart" magazines (*American Mercury*, *New Yorker*, *Esquire*); from the famous weeklies (*Collier's, Saturday Evening Post*) to the national monthlies (*Atlantic, Harper's*); from high-end fashion (*Vogue, Harper's Bazaar*) to women's service magazines (*Ladies' Home Journal, Redbook*, *Good Housekeeping*); from special-interest magazines (*Holiday, Mademoiselle*) to Catholic periodicals (*The Sign, Ave Maria*, *The Critic, St. Jude*), Irish writers were publishing voluminously in U.S. magazines and were handsomely remunerated for their contributions.

Of course, there were differences in the status of these various publications. In his 1956 survey of U.S. magazines James Playsted Wood observed that although *Woman's Day* did not "have the prestige of the big-name women's periodicals" such as *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Better Homes and Gardens,* and *Good Housekeeping*, it was nonetheless the biggest and the best of the phenomenon of "store-distributed magazines" that had arisen since the end of World War II.[6] Laverty's publishing history with *Woman's Day* is worth exploring not only because it reveals the canny strategies by which she framed her work for a U.S. readership, but also because it discloses the significant material benefits of U.S. magazine publication for Irish writers. Her contributions offered her a readership exponentially larger than any

McWilliams, including *Irishness in North American Women's Writing: Transatlantic Affinities* (London: Palgrave, 2021). On Lavin, see Gráinne Hurley, "'Trying to Get the Words Right': Mary Lavin and *The New Yorker*," in *Mary Lavin*, ed. Elke D'hoker (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2013), 81–99, and "To Cut a Long Story Short: The Shaping of Mary Lavin's *New Yorker* Stories," in *Genesis and Revision in Modern British and Irish Writers*, ed. Jonathan Bloom and Catherine Rovera (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2020), 145–68. On Friel, see Scott Boltwood, "'Mildly Eccentric': Brian Friel's Writings for the *Irish Times* and the *New Yorker*," *Irish University Review* 44:2 (2014): 305–22.

5. Heather Ingman, *A History of the Irish Short Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 158.

6. James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: Ronald Press, 1956), 260, 263.

she might have dreamed of in Ireland. For the last six months of 1955, Wood reports, circulation for *Woman's Day* was over 3.8 million copies per issue.[7] By way of comparison the 1956 census in the Republic of Ireland records the lowest population (2.9 million) since the inception of the state.[8] Moreover, U.S. magazines paid far larger fees than British ones, a fact noted by Laverty in a letter to her British agent Jean LeRoy in 1951:

> During the past six months I have managed to place 10 stories in the States. The last sold to Woman's Day for $750. But my market has been limited chiefly to the Catholic magazines—which, incidentally, pay far better than the English "slicks." I should like to extend this market.[9]

The situation in Ireland was even worse. In June 1950 Laverty replied to Francis MacManus of Radio Éireann, noting that a story that he had rejected for being "certainly not up to your standard" had been bought by *Woman's Day* for $300.[10] RTÉ routinely paid Laverty between IR£4 ($11) and IR£10 ($28) per story, depending on length, as well as an additional fee if the author herself read the story for broadcast. By comparison Laverty sold seven stories to *Woman's Day* between June 1950 and September 1951, each of which fetched between $300 and $750.[11] As *Woman's Day* fiction editor Betty Finnin

7. Wood, *Magazines*, 259.
8. "Population Figures Lowest Yet Recorded," *Irish Times,* 2 June 1956, 1.
9. ML to Jean LeRoy, 11 Feb. 1951 (MS 50,678/19, MLP, NLI).
10. "Certainly not up to your standard" appears in a rejection letter from Francis MacManus to ML, 9 November 1949. Laverty's reply is dated 15 June 1950. Both are held in P260/643, RTÉ Radio Scripts (University College Dublin Archives, Dublin, Ireland).
11. Here are a few salutary examples of the fees Laverty's work commanded in Britain versus the United States: in July 1950, *Everywoman* (London) commissioned from Laverty a series of six "Kitchen Chronicles," each to be between 1,600 and 3,000 words in length, at 20 guineas (approximately $58) per installment. See Jean LeRoy to ML, 13 July 1950 (MS 50,678/16, MLP, NLI). In June 1955 Laverty received £31.10 (GBP; less ten percent commission) for selling "First Love Is Remembered Love" to *Britannia and Eve* (London). See Monica Preston to ML, 21 June 1955 (MS 50,678/17, MLP, NLI). This equates to approximately $87. By comparison, she sold the following stories to *Woman's Day* between June 1950 and September 1951: "Miss Fenlon's Aversion" ($300), "That Obstinate Creature" ($500), "The Grey Coat" (published as "He Was No Provider," $600). "The Housekeeper's Story," "Mickey Dazzler," and two sets of "Three Irish Stories" each fetched $750. These amounts

noted in a letter to Laverty, "We're still not up in the price racket [sic] to some of the slicks but we've been climbing steadily."[12] *The Sign* paid less than *Woman's Day*—between $150 and $200 for fiction—but still significantly more than the British magazines.[13]

By focusing on the *Woman's Day* stories, this essay not only extends existing scholarship on Laverty that concentrates almost exclusively on her impact in Ireland but also challenges existing models for understanding mid-twentieth-century Irish literary culture. Although the author was well known in Ireland during her lifetime, the pioneering work of Caitriona Clear reveals the wide extent of Laverty's engagement with and influence on Irish women's lives from the 1930s to the 1960s. She published four novels between 1942 and 1946: the autobiographical *Never No More* (1942) and *No More Than Human* (1946), as well as *Alone We Embark* (1943) (U.S. title, *Touched by the Thorn*) and *Lift up your Gates* (1946) (U.S. title, *Liffey Lane*). After adapting the last as *Liffey Lane* for the Gate Theatre in 1951, Laverty wrote two original plays for the same venue: *Tolka Row* (1951) and *A Tree in the Crescent* (1952). Laverty also authored numerous short stories, three novels for children, and several cookbooks. She penned a regular column for the *Irish Press* in 1946 and was an almost ubiquitous presence on Radio Éireann during the 1940s and 1950s. According to Clear, Laverty was "Mrs. Wyse," the agony aunt (advice columnist) for *Woman's Life*, a fortnightly Irish women's service magazine in the 1930s, 1940s, and possibly the 1950s. Clear, Michael G. Cronin, and Clair Wills have produced compelling scholarship on Laverty, with the latter two focusing on how the novels negotiate changes in rural Ireland during the 1940s.[14] In *The Maura Laverty Story: From Rathangan to Tolka Row* (2017), Seamus Kelly became the first to identify some of the *Woman's Day* stories as well as all of those written for *The Sign*; additionally, he noted how frequently Laverty recycles and

are noted in the following letters from *Woman's Day* fiction editor Betty Finnin to Laverty: 3 July 1951, 21 June 1950, and 15 Aug. 1950 (MS 50,678/19, MLP, NLI).

12. Finnin to ML, 3 Jan. 1951 (MS 50,678/19, MLP, NLI).

13. For the currency conversions, I have relied on the historical currency converter from FXTop.com.

14. See Michael G. Cronin, *Impure Thoughts: Sexuality, Catholicism, and Literature in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012) and Clair Wills, *The Best Are Leaving: Emigration and Post-War Irish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

repurposes her fiction, including the *Woman's Day* stories—an indication of their flexibility and salability in a transatlantic, even global, literary marketplace.[15]

Indeed, Laverty's recurring concerns with women's lives, food, and consumption proved easily translatable from an Irish to an American context.[16] Wills illustrates how increasing consumerist desires on the part of Irish women contributed to anxieties that the traditional sexual economy of rural Ireland was under threat,[17] with such anxiety occurring broadly at the same historical moment that a postwar United States was negotiating the growing role of women as consumers. The association between the supermarket and women's new economic power became strikingly vivid in *Life Magazine*'s 3 January 1955 cover, featuring a child seated in a supermarket cart amid various food items—the cart being pushed by the gloved hands of the off-cover mother. Shane Hamilton reads this mother as "implicitly propelling the entire [$73 billion] 'mass luxury' economy represented by its contents."[18] Laverty's firm sense, already established in *Never No More*, of good housekeeping as a worthy civic goal to be shared by both the traditional extended rural family and the emerging nuclear urban one, made her work an excellent fit for a magazine that pitched itself as a "clearing house" for the endless complications of housework.[19]

Beyond Laverty, this essay also suggests ways of thinking more expansively about mid-twentieth-century Irish literature. It offers

15. Seamus Kelly, *The Maura Laverty Story: From Rathangan to Tolka Row* (Naas, Co. Kildare: Seamus Kelly, 2017), 200–1, 206. I say "global" because Kelly discovered that, in addition to contributing to Irish, British, and U.S. periodicals, Laverty also published in Australia. He notes that "No Love Like Our Love" appeared in *Australian Women's Weekly* in October 1953 (209). In fact, this story had been first published seven months earlier in the U.S. magazine *Ladies' Home Journal* 70:3 (March 1953): 50–51, 206–8, 210.

16. Indeed, some of the *Woman's Day* stories had previously appeared in Irish or British periodicals or had been broadcast on Irish radio. These include "Cupid Is a Fishy Character" (1946, 1949) and "That Obstinate Creature" (1950, 1951). The "Three Irish Stories" of March 1955 had been published in the *Irish Times* the previous August.

17. Wills, *Best Are Leaving*, 68.

18. Shane Hamilton, *Supermarket USA: Food and Power in the Cold War Farms Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 164.

19. On good housekeeping, see Wills, *Best Are Leaving*, 92. "Greetings," *Woman's Day*, 7 Oct. 1937, 3.

U.S. magazine publishing as a phenomenon that challenges "exile" and "emigration" as the dominant modes of framing Irish literary culture produced and/or circulated beyond the borders of the nation-state. James Joyce's model of creative exile, invoking departure from Ireland as a prerequisite to the achievement of creative autonomy, has dominated Irish writing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Certainly, this model—of language, nationality, and religion as inhibiting "nets" from which the artist must flee by leaving Ireland—persisted well into the mid-twentieth century.[20] In 1949 Patrick Kavanagh wrote a "Letter from Ireland" for the *Poetry* magazine in which he described "the poetic situation in Ireland since the death of Yeats."[21] Underwhelmed by most of the fiction, poetry, publishing houses, periodicals, and other literary institutions of Ireland at mid-century, he echoed Joyce's Stephen Dedalus: "Nets are still flung to catch the soul as it is born here." Kavanagh feared that "with the outside world no longer challenging, we may become still more insular, more subject to the inside tyrannies of church and state."[22] Yet by Joyce's death in 1941 a lucrative U.S. marketplace for fiction had already emerged, and Irish writers, far from being insular, were welcoming opportunities to publish in U.S. magazines.

A focus on authors from Ireland appearing in these periodicals challenges the perception evident in Kavanagh's complaint about mid-twentieth-century Irish literary culture as a wasteland stymied by the Catholic church, censorship, and a dearth of sustainable home-grown publishing outlets. Additionally, in a 1956 essay published in the *Spectator*, Benedict Kiely sums up Irish literary culture as "Anything may happen, nothing much is."[23] Or as Eve Patten notes in her introduction to *Irish Literature in Transition, 1940–1980*, the decades that followed 1940 in Ireland were "a time conventionally framed in terms of literary underperformance and political exhaustion," with Irish literary culture becoming "associated with the plight of a remaindered society floundering in the slipstream of Continental

20. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916; London: Penguin, 1992), 220.

21. Patrick Kavanagh, "Letter from Ireland," *Poetry* 74:5 (1949): 286.

22. Ibid., 291.

23. Benedict Kiely, "The Writer's Map," *Spectator*, 20 April 1956, 535.

modernity."[24] A number of scholarly efforts—Wills's study of Ireland during World War II, for example, or recovery work on mid-twentieth-century women writers—have challenged such associations.[25] Still, there is more work to be done.

Maura Laverty and *Woman's Day*

In 1961 Laverty published a cookbook in the United States entitled *Feasting Galore: Recipes and Food Lore from Ireland*; the volume was similar but not identical to *Full and Plenty* (1960), issued in Ireland.[26] She introduces each section of the book with segments, for example, on bread, cakes, and cookies, with related vignettes of village life in County Kildare—seven of which originally appeared as short stories in *Woman's Day.*[27] Begun as a free-recipe leaflet for A&P customers in the 1930s, *Woman's Day* emerged as a thirty-four-page magazine in October 1937, sold exclusively at A&P outlets for two or three cents a copy.[28] Although not originally published in *Woman's Day*, one *Feasting Galore* vignette suggests a particular feature of Laverty's work that made it so appealing to the magazine's American readers. The piece describes the return of Irish migrant Polly Sweeney from the United States and credits her with "teaching Ballyderrig to rise above currant bread."[29] Upon her return to Ireland Polly not only marries her old beau Jimmy Moore but also prevails upon him to leave his job as

24. Eve Patten, "Introduction," in *Irish Literature in Transition, 1940–1980*, ed. Eve Pattern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) 1–2.

25. Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland During the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007).

26. Contrary to assertions by Kelly and Rhona Richman Kenneally that a 1952 edition exists, the 1961 book is the first edition, as confirmed by its Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 61-10563. See Rhona Richman Kenneally, "Memory as Food Performance: The Cookbooks of Maura Laverty," in *Ireland and Quebec: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on History, Culture and Society*, ed. Margaret Kelleher and Michael Kenneally (Dublin: Four Courts, 2016), 166–82.

27. Two further vignettes had previously been published in the Passionist Fathers' periodical *The Sign* out of Union City, New Jersey: "A Shock for the Raven" (July 1951), which introduces the bread section, and "Kiss from Mine Enemy" (September 1952), which prefaces the jellies, jams, and pickles section.

28. In February 1947 the price was raised to five cents a copy and in October 1951 to seven cents.

29. Maura Laverty, *Feasting Galore: Recipes and Food Lore from Ireland* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), 25.

grocer's assistant for Ned Grogan and to work for her in her newly established grocery store. The store prospers, causing Ned's to close, because "Polly threw in free with the goods we bought a share of the cooking wisdom she had gathered during her years in America." The new Moore shop, then, offers "good value, smiles, and a free course in cooking." But Laverty adds that "in addition to baking Polly's good American cakes, we continued to make the cakes which had been baked by our grandmothers."[30] In other words, she embraces new culinary methods and recipes without jettisoning the tried and tested.

In negotiating between traditional cooking and more recent innovations, Laverty reflects the concerns of postwar homemakers. Laura Shapiro reports a tension between the food industry, which actively promoted convenience foods "that needed only a few finishing touches to become flawless representations of real food," and individual homemakers, who often indicated their preference for everyday home cooking.[31] A further debate arose over what "message" a homemaker projected if she used canned and packaged foods. According to Jessamyn Neuhaus, serving "food straight from the can or the package seemed to indicate an unwomanly disinterest in providing for your family." Neuhaus also notes how in the postwar period housewives were offered an array of instructions for "doctored up" processed food that required them to perform additional kitchen tasks to order to serve the very meals advertised as more convenient.[32] This article thus considers the broad landscape of U.S. food buying, meal preparation, and homemaking in the decade or so after World War II, situating Laverty's *Woman's Day* stories as canny interventions in debates about convenience versus effort and thrift, "hard work" versus "fancy trimmings," and "gracious living" versus "a good square meal."

Buying Food: The Village Grocer or the Supermarket

The Polly Sweeney vignette from *Feasting Galore* raises issues about both cooking and shopping: Laverty's villagers do not drive to an

30. Ibid., 27–28.

31. Laura Shapiro, *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America* (2004; New York: Penguin, 2005), 49.

32. Neuhaus, "Way to a Man's Heart," 533.

out-of-town self-service supermarket once a week to purchase their groceries but instead place their orders with Jimmy, who "sliced and weighed and wrapped and packaged" while they wait.[33] The death knell for such a method of food shopping—in which "customers could expect every grocery purchase to entail an elaborate social ritual with a (usually male) clerk physically positioned between the buyer and the goods"— had sounded in the U.S. as early as 1916 when Piggly Wiggly opened its first entirely self-service grocery store in Memphis, Tennessee.[34] By contrast Laverty's depiction of the new Moore village shop reflects an Irish reality; even by the early 1960s supermarkets were far from a ubiquitous presence. The country's first self-service supermarket, H. Williams, opened in Terenure in Dublin in 1957, with the Quinn family following suit three years later in Dundalk, Co. Louth. Automobile ownership, however, remained low in Ireland, and Mary Daly observes that without a car to transport loads of groceries, supermarkets grew slowly.[35] Moreover, Andy Bielenberg and John O'Hagan report that by 1966 Ireland's forty-one supermarkets accounted for only seven percent of food and drink sales.[36] Shops of the sort run by Lena Lynch in Laverty's "A Practical Man"—in which the parlor of her four-room cottage is converted into a store that sells "sweets and toys" and homemade cakes—were increasingly unfamiliar to U.S. consumers.[37]

Indeed, just as the A&P began publishing *Woman's Day*, its own sites were undergoing transformation as they gradually transitioned from chain grocery stores to supermarkets. As Tracey Deutsch explains, supermarkets generally arose independently from grocery stores because of their sheer size, the diversity of goods and services they offered, their location on the edge of residential neighborhoods where parking spaces were abundant, and their gimmicky marketing

33. Laverty, *Feasting Galore,* 27.

34. Hamilton, *Supermarket USA*, 12.

35. Mary Daly, *Sixties Ireland: Reshaping the Economy, State and Society, 1957–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 134.

36. Andy Bielenberg and John O'Hagan, "Consumption and Living Conditions, 1750–2016," in *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland*, ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 208.

37. Laverty, "A Practical Man," *Woman's Day*, Aug. 1951, 43.

campaigns.[38] But as the long-established grocery chains began opening their own supermarkets, such distinctions eroded. The A&P had been a feature of the U.S. food retailing landscape since 1859; between 1919 and 1929 it expanded its national chain from 4,600 to 15,000 stores. The company opened its first supermarket in 1937 and in 1939 signed a ten-year lease on "the largest store it had ever operated in the Chicago area."[39] By 1947 the A&P had become the largest supermarket chain in the world.[40]

As supermarkets developed into the dominant form of food retailing, they elicited creative literary and journalistic treatments that spoke to anxieties around homogenization, standardization, and even brainwashing—one of the most celebrated being Allen Ginsberg's poem "A Supermarket in California" (1956). Another literary critique of the supermarket is set in an A&P outlet; John Updike's short story "A & P" (*New Yorker*, July 1961) contrasts the joylessness of the supermarket with the desire awakened in Sammy, a teenage checkout operator, by the arrival of three scantily clad young women who have just been to the beach. Whereas the supermarket is a space of bland abundance—with its "HiHo crackers," and its "cat-and-dog-food-breakfast-cereal-macaroni-rice-raisins-seasonings-spreads-spaghetti-soft-drinks-crackers-and-cookies-aisle"[41]—the young woman whom Sammy nicknames "Queenie" embodies a sensuousness rendered in contrasting gastronomic terms. She pays for her snacks with a note taken from her bikini top, from "between the two smoothest scoops of vanilla I had ever known were there."[42]

38. Tracey Deutsch, "From 'Wild Animal Stores' to Women's Sphere: Supermarkets and the Politics of Mass Consumption, 1930–1950," *Business and Economic History* 28:1 (1999): 143–53, 149.

39. Tracey Deutsch, *Building a Housewife's Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 58, 148.

40. Hamilton, *Supermarket USA*, 6.

41. John Updike, "A & P," *The New Yorker*, 22 July 1961, 22. For a discussion of other examples of supermarkets in fiction from the late 1950s to the late 1980s, see David Alworth, *Site Reading: Fiction, Art, Social Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016). See also Andrew Warnes's detailed engagement with Alworth in "The Drive-Thru Supermarket: Supermarkets and the Foodscapes of American Literature," in *Food and Literature*, ed. Gitanjali G. Shahani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 59–74.

42. Updike, "A & P," 24.

In *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957) the journalist and critic Vance Packard discusses how advertisers use "mass psychoanalysis to guide campaigns of persuasion." He cites research by James Vicary claiming that upon entering "the new jungle called the supermarket," housewives "fell into . . . a hypnoidal trance," ensuring that they "wandered about the store plucking things off shelves at random" and "passed by neighbors and old friends without noticing or greeting them," except with a "glassy stare." Citing packaging designer Gerald Stahl, Packard argues that to encourage impulse buying, food manufacturers created packaging intended to "hypnotize the woman like a flashlight waved in front of her eyes." Other strategies—such as supermarket layout, free samples, and the invention of mini shopping carts to encourage children to imitate their mothers' impulse buying habits—for Packard constitute forms of "sly persuasion" that resulted in the proportion of annual household income spent on food increasing from 23 to 30 percent.[43]

Woman's Day, not unexpectedly, did not peddle nightmarish visions of the contemporary supermarket; instead its approach to shopping tended to be pragmatic. From 1941 the magazine was scrupulous about estimating the price tag of the recipes it created: "We will figure the cost of each recipe by using prices that are average throughout the country. These prices will fit conditions found locally in self-service supermarkets by the majority of our readers."[44] Nonetheless, some copy that *Woman's Day* published implied both the negative and the positive aspects of such new forms of domestic food procurement. In Laverty's *Never No More* (1942), Delia recounts that money "never entered into Grandmother's dealings" with the local draper and grocer: "Barter was largely practiced in Ballyderrig. Like other Irish farming women, she paid for her goods in eggs and butter."[45] In the age of the supermarket—and in a publication sold exclusively in such stores—barter might seem remote from actual consumption practices. Yet it was discussed periodically in the "Neighbors" or "Between Neighbors" section of the magazine, which printed letters from *Woman's*

43. Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: McKay, 1957), 3, 105, 107, 108, 111.

44. Cora Anthony, "We Price and Date Our Recipes," *Woman's Day*, Jan. 1941, 39.

45. Maura Laverty, *Never No More* (1942; London: Virago, 1989), 33.

Day readers. In 1941, for example, the Alabama housewife Mrs. W. D. Russell described exchanging a lace tablecloth that she had crocheted for repairs on her porch: "I find I can trade my handwork for most anything I want."[46] In 1947 Mrs. Brenda L. Corrigan of Jackson, Mississippi, explained her "neighborhood exchange" where onions were bartered for home-repair materials and garden roses for the use of a lawnmower.[47] And in 1950 a *Woman's Day* article actually encouraged its American readers to barter rather than to buy: "What can *you* barter? Your services or your surplus goods. . . . Can you typewrite, sew, repair a car, decorate, garden, or do something else a little better than average? You can exchange that service for something you want." First among the article's tips for bartering was the advice, "You'll do better with the small merchant, farmer, and professional man"—an acknowledgment of alternative ways of trading for food.[48]

On the other hand, an endorsement of U.S. supermarket shopping as a quasipatriotic act appears in Lorna Slocombe's "Vive le Hot Dog!" (*Woman's Day*, January 1955). In that American-set story George Shelby is alarmed when his wife Amy—under the influence of a sophisticated and worldly neighbor—aspires to learn French, travel to Paris, and "get in with the right crowd."[49] He tries to persuade her that their life in Boston has just as much to offer culturally as Europe does. At a party at the neighbor's home, where the conversation mostly involves swapping anecdotes about the guests' previous trips to France, the Shelbys—who have never vacationed abroad—explain to a visiting French economist how an American supermarket works:

> You get a little cart and select your groceries from the shelves. You can get frozen beefsteak, frozen fried potatoes, and frozen broccoli, and go home and thaw out dinner. For milk you have your choice of pasteurized, homogenized, buttermilk, nonfat, and chocolate. Then you have your choice of six different kinds of canned foods for the cat. . . . You get your coffee ground in a machine, set for regular, percolator, drip, or vacuum.[50]

46. Mrs. W. D. Russell, "Barter and Exchange," *Woman's Day*, Sept. 1941, 7.
47. Mrs. Brenda L. Corrigan, "Barter and Exchange," *Woman's Day*, Aug. 1947, 98.
48. Clayre Lipman, "If You Want It, Barter!" *Woman's Day*, Sept. 1950, 15.
49. Lorna Slocombe, "Vive le Hot Dog!" *Woman's Day,* Jan. 1955, 125.
50. Ibid., 126.

A fascinated Professor Bouchier insists on accompanying the couple on their next trip to the supermarket and on joining them for dinner afterward. Through his eyes Amy's interest in what she has imagined as her unremarkable life is restored, and she resolves to cook Professor Bouchier "a real New England Saturday-night supper" complete with Boston baked beans, brown bread, and hot dogs.[51] A paean to the wide choice available to consumers in U.S. supermarkets, this American-authored story became a virtual advertisement for the A&P.

American Ambivalence: Convenience Food versus Home Cooking

An article in the 3 January 1955 issue of *Life Magazine* focused on the variety of "servants" available to help homemakers to save time—the servants "who come built into the frozen, canned, dehydrated, and pre-cooked foods which lend busy women a thousand extra hands in preparing daily meals."[52] In her history of the encroachment of convenience and packaged foods on U.S. kitchens after World War II, Shapiro identifies two conflicting perspectives. On the one hand, the chef James Beard warned that "the housewife was losing her way, forfeiting her skills, mindlessly surrendering to packaged foods whenever they beckoned." On the other, Poppy Cannon, author of *The Can-Opener Cookbook* (1952), viewed such a housewife as "heading smartly into the future, reinventing great culinary traditions with the help of epicurean new products."[53] A similar tension is visible in the pages of *Woman's Day* and indeed in other magazines and newspapers of the period. Shapiro describes an ongoing struggle between the domestic ideal of home cooking and the industry's alluring offerings of ready-made or pre-packaged foods.[54] The careful reader of *Woman's Day* will notice a marked contrast between the recipes supplied in advertisements appearing in the magazine's pages and the in-house recipes that emerged from its kitchen—with the latter likely

51. Ibid., 128.

52. "Ways to Cut Down Kitchen Work," *Life*, 3 Jan. 1955, 17.

53. Shapiro, *Something from the Oven*, 5. Beard later became a contributor to *Woman's Day*, writing regularly about food between 1957 and 1983.

54. Shapiro, *Something from the Oven*, 48–49.

to feature "from scratch" or more labor-intensive methods. Laverty appeared to intuit this tension, and her stories often appeal to her readers' seemingly instinctive preference for "home cooking." In "Every Saturday Night" (March 1955), describing the gravy in Statia Dunne's stew, Laverty recounts:

> Years of practice and experimenting had gone to find out the exact amount of mustard that should be added for tanginess, of sugar for the faint underlying sweetness, and of vinegar for a teasing sharpness. It had a leaf of this herb, a sprig of that. And it was full of the goodness of the meat and vegetable juices that had run into it during the slow, careful cooking.[55]

Such culinary advice in an Irish-authored *Woman's Day* story contrasts strikingly with advertisements for the ready-made Gravy Master—"a pure liquid concentrate of . . . celery, onion, and garlic"—or B.-V.—"a highly concentrated combination of rich meat juices and selected vegetable flavors" that appeared regularly in the magazine.[56]

Laverty's *Woman's Day* contributions, however, were far from resistant to the virtues (within limits) of food-industry offerings. *Maura Laverty's Cookery Book* (1946) salutes America for conferring "on harassed hostesses the inestimable benefits of canned food," and its author declares her love of "Messrs. Heinz and Campbell . . . for the trail [they] blazed!" Laverty's approach, much like that of her American contemporaries, particularly the thrift-conscious readers of *Woman's Day*, was to use canned goods in concert with other ingredients. "Tinned soup is like whisky," she writes: "It can blow your budget to bits if you take it straight. Mixed with other and less costly things, it won't ruin you." Vegetable soups such as tomato and mushroom "may always be stretched by the addition of cream sauce and water," she advises. But Laverty warns against using tinned corned beef: "There is an enduring *something* about tinned corned beef that makes it as easy to detect as a legless fugitive with cauliflower ears and a cast in his eye. Disguise it how you will, your tin will find you out."[57]

55. Maura Laverty, "Every Saturday Night," in "Three Irish Stories," *Woman's Day,* March 1955, 38.

56. "Gravy Master Advertisement," *Woman's Day*, Dec. 1937, 30, and "Wilson & Co. Advertisement," *Woman's Day,* Aug. 1945, 70.

57. Maura Laverty, *Maura Laverty's Cookery Book* (London: Longman's, 1946), 110, 111, 113.

Whereas the U.S. food industry's frozen, packaged, and canned innovations were generally greeted with ambivalence by American homemakers—hundreds of products proved so unpopular that they quickly disappeared from the market—the industry scored a number of key successes: frozen vegetables, orange juice, fish sticks, and cake mixes.[58] And in this context Laverty's "fresh fish" and "home baking" short stories are particularly significant. In her first *Woman's Day* publication, "Cupid is a Fishy Character" (February 1949), Frank Whelan is a keen fisherman fortunate to catch a pike, which he offers to his companion Jimmy Foran. Frank knows that his own landlady Mrs. Carey and her daughter Celia—his fiancée—"can't stand fish."[59] Not wanting his friend to miss out on his catch, Jimmy invites Frank home to the house that he shares with his sister Bridie, who prepares a feast:

> Inside twenty minutes the pike was cleaned and scaled and beheaded, and she was packing it with an aromatic mixture of bread crumbs, parsley, thyme, chopped onion, a few tablespoonfuls of minced fat bacon—the whole lot seasoned and bound with egg and milk. She buttered the fish generously, laid rashers of bacon across it, added bay leaves and a squeeze of lemon and put it into the baker.[60]

Notably, the fish is baked in a "pot-oven"—hearth cooking—rather than in a gas or electric range.[61] After the meal Frank promptly breaks off his engagement to Celia and within six months marries Bridie. The lure of home cooking appears again in Laverty's "Mr. Hennessy's Inspiration" (July 1957), in which the titular character, the chairman of the Fishery Board, tries to apprehend the convict Barney Malone—a known but affable salmon poacher. Passing the cottage of Barney's sweetheart one day, from which wafts the aroma of "salmon frying in butter," Hennessy realizes an opportunity to catch the poacher red-handed. Seeing "two thick and rosy salmon steaks sizzling tunefully" on the fire, he has evidence enough to send Barney to jail. But Nellie Ryan, now declaring herself too upset by the apprehension of her fiancé to partake in the feast—salmon steak served with "spring onions and baby carrots that had simmered in cream" and "mealy

58. Shapiro, *Something from the Oven*, 13–15, 21, 72–73.
59. Maura Laverty, "Cupid Is a Fishy Character," *Woman's Day,* Feb. 1949, 35.
60. Ibid., 96.
61. Ibid., 35.

new potatoes"—offers the meal to Mr. Hennessy.[62] Unable to resist the delicious dinner, the Fishery Board chairman is also "inspired" to excuse Barney of his crimes and appoint him water bailiff.

Such stories, celebrating the power of traditional home cooking, clearly offer a far different attitude toward fresh versus canned ingredients from the assumptions of some *Woman's Day* food features on fish. Five months after "Cupid Is a Fishy Character" appeared, the magazine ran a contest inviting readers to send in "*new* ways, *new* recipes using canned fish," and published the results in October 1949.[63] Other examples include Marjorie Henderson's "Fish Without Fuss" from March 1954, comprised of "13 quick-and-easy fish dishes made with frozen fish fillets, plus 6 fancy sauces for frozen cooked fish sticks or bite-size pieces" (see figure 1).[64] The following March *Woman's Day* ran another "Fish without Fuss" feature, this time advising readers that using "canned or frozen fish" is "the secret of trouble-saving sea food dishes. Then there'll be no cleaning or shelling and no waste either."[65] Yet *Woman's Day* also published many recipes that called for fresh fish even though the principal editorial concern remained thrift rather than convenience. And if "Cupid Is a Fishy Character" features a river-to-table meal, Laverty is by no means condescending about the possible reluctance of her readers to prepare fresh fish for cooking. Significantly, she appends the following "N.B." to the end of the story: "I have a certain sympathy with Celia Carey in the matter of cleaning a pike. If someone should bring home a pike to you, choose the lesser part of valor and get the fishmonger to clean it for you—he'll do it for a shilling."[66] Moreover, Laverty herself did not hesitate to use canned fish, for she includes a recipe using tinned salmon in *Maura Laverty's Cookery Book*.[67]

Although cake mixes first appeared in the early 1930s and Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix had been around since 1889, neither made inroads in the market until General Mills (Betty Crocker) and

62. Maura Laverty, "Mr. Hennessy's Inspiration," *Woman's Day,* July 1957, 65.

63. See "New Contest: Canned Fish Recipes," *Woman's Day*, July 1949, 9 (italics in original), and "Prize-Winning Canned Fish Recipes," *Woman's Day*, Oct. 1949, 86–87.

64. Marjorie Henderson, "Fish without Fuss," *Woman's Day*, March 1954, 108.

65. "Fish Without Fuss," *Woman's Day*, March 1955, 61.

66. Laverty, "Cupid," 96.

67. Laverty, *Cookery Book*, 27.


ca[illegible] and frozen • quick • appetizing • always in season • easy • conveni

SEVEN PAGES OF

fish without fuss

Use canned or frozen fish—
that's the secret of trouble-
saving sea food dishes.
Then there'll be no
cleaning or shelling,
and no waste, either.
Here and on the following pages,
we show you photographs
of 10 fish dishes made
with canned or frozen **shrimp,**
lobster tails, crab meat,
oysters, clams, tuna,
salmon, scallops, fish sticks,
and **fish fillets.**
See how good they look,
then turn to pages 65 to 67,
and see how easy
they are to prepare

Curried Rock-lobster Salad in bright lobster shells is accented with mayonnaise and olive slices. Good with frozen corn-on-cob and hard rolls

WOMAN'S DAY KITCHEN

continued on the following pages

MARCH, 1955

61

FIGURE 1. "Fish without Fuss," *Women's Day*, March 1955.

Pillsbury launched them in 1948.[68] Shapiro notes that Ernest Dichter, a researcher employed by General Mills, provided a convincing explanation for the success of cake mixes in the 1950s compared with their reception in the 1930s: the "egg theory." Whereas early cake mixes contained dried egg, later ones advised homemakers to add a fresh egg to the mix—producing the dual effect of improving the flavor of the cake and instilling in the housewife a sense that she was making some contribution to the baking process. Shapiro reports that such research led to advertising and articles persuading women "to differentiate between the plain cake layers—'merely step number one,' according to [the magazine] *Living*—and the finished masterpiece."

68. Shapiro, *Something from the Oven*, 72.

RING-AROUND-A-ROSY CAKE

MATERIALS NEEDED

Party mints 1" in diameter
Lollipops 1" in diameter
Food coloring
1 angel food or chiffon cake, or layercake rounds
Instant frosting mix
Confectioners' sugar
Spice drops
Small paintbrush
Paper doilies, candy cups, or shelf edging for bonnets
Decorator set
Candles and holders

RING-AROUND-A-ROSY CAKE Page 1

With undiluted food coloring, use tiny paintbrush to paint faces on mints. For hair, eyebrows, etc., experiment mixing primary colors, red, blue, and yellow, a drop at a time, using more blue for brunettes and more yellow for blondes. Be sure to try color first on an extra mint; colors change when absorbed in mint.

Brush crumbs from cake. Prepare frosting; spread thin layer over top and sides of cake. Set aside. If frosting is not very stiff, add a little confectioners' sugar (1 to 4 tablespoons) to remaining frosting. With a generous dab of frosting, attach mint faces to lollipops. Make bonnets from doilies, etc., and with a little frosting attach to lollipops. Push lollipop sticks into cake around outer edge of top.

Divide remaining frosting into small bowls, a bowl for each color to be used. (It may be necessary to make more frosting if several colors are wanted for dresses.) Add food coloring. We used a decorating set with a fluting tip to put the colored frosting dresses on the cake.

When dresses are complete, cut spice drops in halves, and put on to indicate hands and feet. Put candles in holders, as many candles as dolls, and arrange between spice-drop hands around cake. Extra candles can be arranged in center.

FIGURE 2. "Ring-Around-A-Rosy Cake," *Women's Day*, May 1956.

Thus "the real art of baking began after the cake emerged from the oven" and its decoration commenced.[69]

Woman's Day featured advertisements for cake mixes from as early as 1939 and ran a competition in May 1949 noting the popularity of packaged mixes and inviting readers to submit recipes that demonstrated "some uses not mentioned on the package."[70] In August the magazine published prize-winning results that turned to package roll, biscuit, pie crust, lemon crust, gingerbread, and white cake mixes as the basis for the recipes.[71] Years later, the May 1956 issue contained directions for a "Ring-Around-A-Rosy Cake" that provides instructions for making figures holding hands around the cake with party mints. No recipe is offered for the birthday cake itself, presumably one made from a mix (see figure 2).

69. Ibid., 77.
70. "New Contest: New Ways with Packaged Mixes," *Woman's Day*, May 1949, 6.
71. "Prize-Winning Ways with Packaged Mixes," *Woman's Day*, Aug. 1949, 30–31.

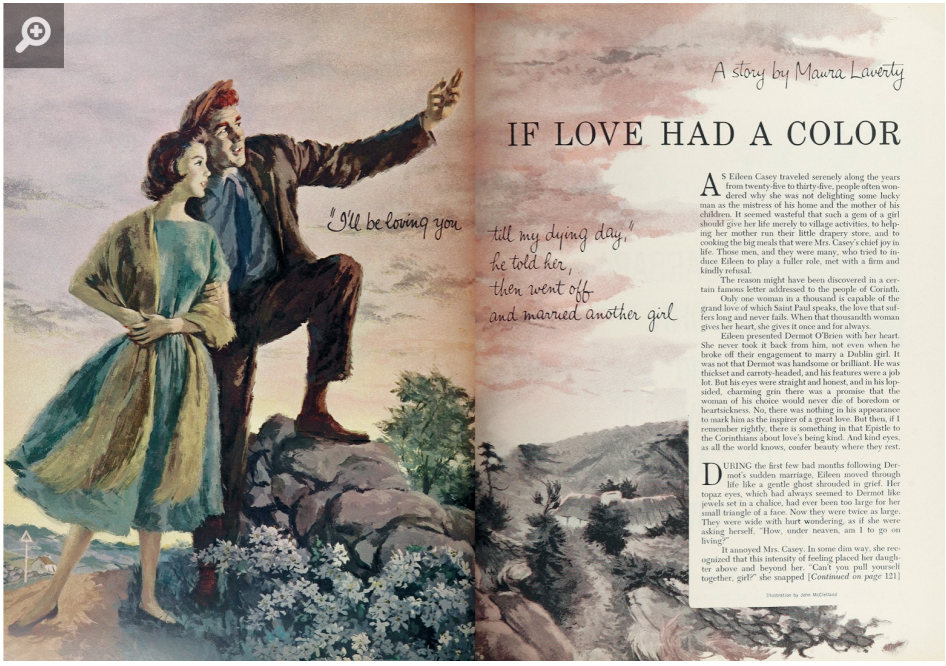

FIGURE 3. Lead illustration for "If Love Had a Color," *Women's Day*, May 1956.

Laverty's story "If Love Had a Color" was published in the same issue in which the "Ring-Around-A-Rosy Cake" appeared, and like many of her stories, it yokes together romance and cooking/baking (see figure 3). At the age of twenty-five Eileen Casey is thrown over by her fiancé Dermot O'Brien, for after a drunken encounter with a young woman in Dublin he is obliged to marry her because she is pregnant. Before the wedding he sends Eileen a letter expressing regret at his treatment of her, telling her that he will love her until his "dying day."[72] Ten years later, Eileen lives with her widowed mother, working at the family drapery store and still mourning the loss of her true love. One August day her mother asks her to bake a "pineapple layer cake with the thick frosting" for a supper that she is hosting for her friends. Eileen balks at the suggestion—"That cake will take half a day to bake and frost . . . in a hot kitchen"—but she eventually agrees.[73] That same day Eileen learns that Dermot has recently been

72. Maura Laverty, "If Love Had a Color," *Woman's Day*, May 1956, 123.
73. Ibid., 126.

widowed, and that his child is staying locally with Dermot's uncle. The cake is a success:

> Each of the four layers had a puffy symmetry that bore witness to a smooth melting texture. The filling had never been so creamy, so exactly right in consistency. . . . It was perfect—sweet and luscious and with just the correct amount of shredded pineapple lacing its velvety richness to give it a palate-teasing tang. Never had she made boiled frosting that responded to the whisk in such snow-crisp whirls and peaks. And never had a finished cake looked so inviting.[74]

Out walking after her baking endeavors, Eileen comes across a forlorn-looking girl and realizes almost immediately that she must be Katie, Dermot's daughter. Since the day is Katie's birthday and the child is sad because she has received no gift in the mail from her father, Eileen runs home to retrieve the cake and a few other tokens. Soon afterward Dermot arrives on the bus from Dublin, and he and Eileen are reunited. The story's happy ending is reinforced: the home-baked cake, the fruits of Eileen's hours of labor in the kitchen, finds its rightful home with a young girl rather than with the gluttonous Mrs. Casey, who "was born with an extra stomach where her heart should be."[75] Moreover, Eileen's culinary creation, unlike *Woman's Day*'s "Ring-Around-A-Rosy Cake," invokes the rewards of traditional domesticity rather than the ease and convenience of a cake-mix product.

Fostering Community through Homemaking

The section of *Woman's Day* titled "Just Between Neighbors" or "Neighbors" reveals both the preoccupations of the magazine's readers and an editorial endorsement of their concerns. This section was clearly intended to foster a sense of neighborliness among the magazine's national readership—perhaps reflecting the loosening of community ties during an era of relocation to the suburbs. Framed as "an exchange of opinions and practical experience by our readers—for our readers," it typically featured letters in which women offered each

74. Ibid., 128.
75. Ibid., 125.

other advice on a range of topics such as "make, do and mend," home remodeling, gardening, holiday decorating, saving money/thriftiness, and child-rearing. One significant subset of "Neighbors" letters relates to the joys and travails of homemaking itself. These often feature divergent views on the daily routine involved in housework—its monotony and tips on how to deal with such repetitiveness. For example, reader Jean Cowles recommends what she calls her "upside-down" days: performing her daily tasks in reverse order.[76] Mrs. Ivern Boyette writes that she keeps a notebook containing new recipes or ideas for brightening a room, and that on a day when she can't face her "routine chores," she takes out the notebook to find "what seems most interesting, and start[s] right in to try it."[77] She reports that having tried something new, she is "so refreshed and energetic" that she gets through her regular tasks in half the time. Other letters counsel resisting domestic routine. Mrs. William S. Burke advises that one must stop work and enjoy one's family at some point: "The *home* is more than the *house*. Yes, a woman's work is never done, unless she *makes* it be done."[78] Yet other letter writers convey their longing for an elusive, even disappearing domestic sense of plenitude. In 1949 Mrs. Charles Mohat of Brewerton, New York, writes of her homesickness for her "grandmother's pantry on the farm." She recalls

> its broad shelves of plain scrubbed pine laden with blocks of pure maple sugar and golden loaves of bread. The lower shelves bore up under huge crocks of various flowers, leaf-lard and home-ground cornmeal, and the egg crates were under the large broad shelf. On the shelf itself there was always a pan of milk waiting to be skimmed of its cream. A little finger often found its way into that cream.

Mohat concludes, "if modern home designers could only capture the sense of well-being and security found in that pantry, they would indeed give something to posterity."[79]

76. Mrs. Jean Cowles, "My Upside-Down Days," *Woman's Day*, Feb. 1947, 102.
77. Mrs. Ivern Boyette, "I Climb Out of the Rut," *Woman's Day*, Oct. 1949, 129.
78. Mrs. Wm. S. Burke, "This Is My System," *Woman's Day*, May 1946, 18. These issues were also discussed in the magazine's articles. See, for example, Joan Daniels, "Marthas of the World," *Woman's Day*, May 1947, 3, 126, and Dorothy Pray, "A Housewife Asks Plaintively: Do I Have to Be Frustrated?" *Woman's Day,* Aug. 1951, 26–27, 74–75.
79. Mrs. Charles Mohat, "My Grandmother's Pantry," *Woman's Day*, Feb. 1949, 12.

Laverty's stories, the first of which appeared in the same issue of *Woman's Day* as Mohat's 1949 letter, perform precisely such work: they foster a sense of "well-being and security" through their depictions of an abundance that is rarely available through supermarket shopping. Indeed, collectively, Laverty's *Woman's Day* stories might be viewed as fictional counterparts to the "Just Between Neighbors"/"Neighbors" section of the magazine; employing a confidential tone, Laverty smuggles cooking and homemaking tips into stories framed as whimsical romance or childhood reminiscence. In "Fruit Roll at Grange" (November 1952) the child narrator describes an impromptu tea that she enjoys at a neighbor's house and marvels at the "grand red color" of the apples in the apple flan. "I learned afterward that she managed this by cooking a few slices of beetroot with the apples," the young narrator informs readers. At the story's conclusion Laverty provides the recipe for the "fruit roll" of the title:

> Just an oblong of short-crust pastry, brushed with melted butter and covered with a layer of chopped raisins, nuts, candied peel, and apples, sweetened with a sprinkling of brown sugar and enlivened with a dusting of cinnamon. Wet the edges, roll up, and bake for forty-five minutes in a moderate oven.[80]

In "The Return of Nora Nolan"—another of the "Three Irish Stories" that Laverty published in November 1952—the narrator describes the scalloped potatoes that her mother prepared for a family meal on a typical (meatless) Friday during Lent:

> She peeled the potatoes, cut them in thick slices, and put them to cook for five minutes in boiling, salted water. Then she drained them and put layers in a greased casserole, sprinkling each layer with chopped onion, pepper and salt, and bits of butter. When the dish was full, she poured in enough scalded milk to come halfway up. . . .[81]

Scalloped potatoes were a favored accompaniment in *Woman's Day* recipes, with some instructions providing "from scratch" preparation and others involving shortcuts. By the mid-1960s, however, French's

80. Maura Laverty, "Fruit Roll at Grange," in "Three Irish Stories," *Woman's Day*, Nov. 1952, 69.

81. Maura Laverty, "The Return of Nora Nolan," in "Three Irish Stories," *Woman's Day*, Nov. 1952, 66–67.

and Betty Crocker were advertising packaged scalloped potatoes, the latter "ready for the oven in just three minutes."[82] Laverty's strategy of embedding recipes into her narratives would have been familiar to readers of *Never No More*. But the device was especially effective in *Woman's Day* in that it allowed readers to enjoy the narrative while considering the story's view of "from scratch" cooking in relation both to the magazine's advertisements and to its in-house recipes.

Despite her sympathetic invocations of old-fashioned homemaking, Laverty nevertheless conveys her awareness of changing attitudes toward domesticity among mid-twentieth-century women. In "To Each Her Own" (October 1954) Wendy and David are engaged, with David insisting that Wendy give up a fulfilling job after they marry. When they visit David's aunt Elizabeth in a large but shabby house in Clonmel, Wendy realizes—despite the delicious meal his aunt has served in her warm and welcoming home—that Elizabeth is struggling financially. With the young couple's marriage Wendy becomes a full-time—if reluctant and unskilled—homemaker. A mutually convenient solution is reached when Elizabeth moves in permanently with Wendy and David to keep house for them, thus relieving her of the ignominy of entering St. Joseph's Home for Needy Gentlewomen. Wendy, discouraged by three months of "cakes that had fallen and sauces that had burned," can now return to work.[83] Here Laverty acknowledges the frustration felt by the younger woman whose career aspirations are initially curtailed by traditional domestic values. Negotiating brilliantly between the generations, however, the author never denies the joy of homemaking for older women like Aunt Elizabeth.

The Perils and Pleasures of "Gracious Living"

Another postwar trend was, as Shapiro observes, "gracious-living journalism." Magazines such as *Living* and *Life* "were stuffed with ads and editorial copy aimed at helping readers furnish and equip their new lives [as homeowners]." Such copy offered images of sophisticated American couples who "served their guests casual yet dramatic dishes

82. "Betty Crocker Advertisement," *Woman's Day*, March 1966, 105.
83. Maura Laverty, "To Each Her Own," *Woman's Day*, Oct. 1954, 177.

such as French onion soup" or "ham de luxe cooked in champagne."[84] *Woman's Day*'s readership, however, was made up of lower- or aspiring middle-class homemakers without servants who were managing tight household budgets. Not unexpectedly, a subset of the magazine's fiction and nonfiction gently mocked those with aspirations toward refinement, sophistication, and "gracious living." The American-authored "Vive le Hot Dog!" is just one example. Another is James Reid Parker's "At Home, Wednesdays" (April 1947), in which Edith Field returns from a visit to cousin Amy Vansittart in St. Louis envious of her "old Chinese wallpaper [and] hand-carved paneling with the grape motif." Although Edith becomes determined to host a series of formal teas on Wednesday afternoons, just as her cousin does,[85] the inaugural social event is beset by mishaps: her hired help and invitees alike are bewildered by the tea's formality, and her husband returns and engages in practical carpentry work in the kitchen, thus distracting her guests. Finally, Edith happily resigns herself to the failed experiment, realizing that she'd "rather have us the way we are and go on living the way we've always lived."[86]

A concern with unrealistic domestic aspirations also pervades *Woman's Day* nonfiction. In a 1949 article Levy Newman discusses the increasingly bizarre and pointless gadgets marketed to those aspiring to "gracious living." He is particularly scathing about a fourteen-carat-gold collar designed for the neck of a champagne bottle to prevent spillage as wine is being poured.[87] Nodding at *Woman's Day* readers who will appreciate his heavy irony, Newman writes that "this business of dripping champagne is something that has caused my wife and me much concern."[88] In a 1954 article the American author Cady Hewes writes of his wife's periodic forays into "gracious living" in the form of cosmopolitan gastronomy, with her aspirations focused on *Cordon Bleu* cooking: "Water cress or endive or chicory has replaced the usual lettuce in our salad; odd tastes—mostly fennel, I suppose—have been added to the dressing. Shallots, those café-society onions, have shown up in various dishes; we find parsley in the

84. Shapiro, *Something in the Oven,* 27–28.
85. James Reid Parker, "At Home, Wednesdays," *Woman's Day*, April 1947, 27.
86. Ibid., 72.
87. Levy Newman, "A Note on Gadgets," *Woman's Day*, May 1949, 32.
88. Ibid., 86.

petits pois; mushrooms are in nearly everything."[89] Although Hewes favors bland cuisine, his wife equally savors *caneton à l'orange* and a dill pickle or boiled egg. Having realized that her elaborate efforts are somewhat misplaced, the wife eventually returns to preparing standard fare (meatloaf, macaroni and cheese, corned-beef hash), safe in the knowledge that while she may be "wasting talents which those of finer mold would appreciate," her own hearty enjoyment of whatever she prepares more than compensates for her sacrificed ambition.[90]

In Laverty's work "gracious living" exists in inverse relation to "a good square meal"—a preoccupation woven throughout her short stories, not just those appearing in *Woman's Day*. In "The Bashful Bridegroom" (1951) the narrator admits to attaching "importance to the eye-appeal of meals." But she also has "no patience with women who rate the trimmings as high as the meal, and who have a snobbish and foolish notion that scraps of this and that will—provided they are served with enough frills—make up for a lack of hearty nourishing food."[91] In "Sauce for the Gander" (November 1952)—a *Woman's Day* short story mocking "gracious living"—newlyweds Dan and Sheila Foley fall out over the bride's attempts to cook sophisticated but insubstantial meals. Sheila has been raised by two maiden aunts to believe that "if you had enough cutlery, glass, and lace mats on the table, nothing else mattered." Their idea of "a good square meal" was "a triangle of toast trimmed with a circlet of dressed crab and a star of parsley."[92] At first Dan accepts his wife's cooking with equanimity, but after prolonged hunger sets in, he becomes snappy with Sheila and consults Jim Regan at the pub. This acquaintance informs him that "a woman won't ever be happy till you let her see who's boss." Accordingly, Dan returns home to exert his masculine authority, telling Sheila to "keep the frills and falderals for when your aunts come visiting."[93]

89. Cady Hewes, "My Wife Is Many Cooks," *Woman's Day*, April 1954, 81, 145.

90. Ibid., 144.

91. Maura Laverty, "Kitchen Chronicles No. 4: The Bashful Bridegroom," *Everywoman*, Nov. 1951, 45. A typescript of this story, dated 13 June 1951, is also preserved in RTÉ Radio Scripts, P260/634 (Scripts of Radio Talks and Features in English, University College Dublin Archives, Dublin, Ireland).

92. Maura Laverty, "Sauce for the Gander," in "Three Irish Stories," *Woman's Day*, Nov. 1952, 67.

93. Ibid., 68–69.

As this summary of "Sauce for the Gander" suggests, Laverty's *Woman's Day* fiction was inconsistent in its gender politics. Several of the stories—"Cupid Is a Fishy Character," "Sauce for the Gander," "Miss Fenlon's Aversion" (February 1952), and "Soup for a Stranger" (March 1955)—contend that the "way to a man's heart is through his stomach." We can read them in the larger context of how Irish femininity signified as traditional, and therefore as nonthreatening, in the United States after World War II. Stephanie Rains notes how Irish colleens in films such as John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952) were "positioned as instinctive nurturers and homemakers.[94] But other *Woman's Day* stories, such as "To Each Her Own" and "Mickey Dazzler" (July 1953), undermine this mold, the latter ending with Peggy Byrne refusing a farmer's proposal of marriage because he wants "a housekeeper . . . and not a wife." Instead she accepts a milkman's offer because "it would be better for a girl to be a queen in a tenement than a slave in a farmhouse."[95] As with Laverty's careful navigation of the tensions animating the U.S. kitchen, the negotiation of gender politics in such stories no doubt pleased many readers without alienating others.

Conclusion

Laverty's fiction offers a valuable case study of how Irish writers conceived of themselves as active players in a transatlantic literary marketplace. For some authors the possibility of publication in U.S. magazines was a double-edged sword. In a 1957 essay for the U.S. Catholic periodical *Commonweal*, Brian Friel wrote that "when you write for the American market, you must keep in mind that you are writing for export only." There are "certain aspects of Irish life that you ignore lest you upset the traditional concept of Irish life which Americans have."[96] Laverty was not unaware of these risks. Although her correspondence with the fiction editor of *Woman's Day* was always cordial, she bristled at "one very discouraging note" in a letter from Betty Finnin rejecting "The Hazel Veil" for the magazine in 1961:

94. Stephanie Rains, *The Irish-American in Popular Culture, 1945–1995* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 158.

95. Maura Laverty, "Mickey Dazzler," *Woman's Day*, July 1953, 54, 55.

96. Brian Friel, "For Export Only," *Commonweal* 65:20 (15 Feb. 1957): 510.

"You mentioned that your chief objection . . . was that it was 'too Irish.' Betty, I'm afraid that this is a fault I'll never be able to change. I can write only in the idiom in which I speak and think. And the only people about whom I can write with authority and sincerity are my own people—the people I know inside-out."[97]

Several stories, moreover, allude self-reflexively to the negative influence that popular magazines might exert on homemakers. Of gluttonous Mrs. Casey in "If Love Had a Color" Laverty writes: "Her eyes could not alight on a brightly illustrated recipe in a magazine but her mouth watered, and her lust for the new dainty made her bad-tempered until Eileen had cooked it for her."[98] Alternatively, Laverty realized that the enticing copy and illustrations of the magazines sometimes fostered a sense of inadequacy among readers. Wendy, the lackluster young homemaker in "To Each Her Own," is "prepared to concede that the beef olives bore no resemblance to the illustration in the magazine from which she had taken the recipe."[99] Still, Laverty's long relationship with *Woman's Day* exemplifies the value of studying her contributions to U.S. magazines, an approach that promises to serve as a powerful corrective to assumptions of the creative and financial impoverishment of mid-twentieth-century Irish writing.

97. ML to Betty Finnin, 7 Oct. 1961 (MS 50,678/20, MLP, NLI).
98. Laverty, "If Love Had a Color," 125.
99. Laverty, "To Each Her Own," 177.