Jeff Goodwin, James Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, the editors of *Passionate Politics*, a study of the role of emotions in protest movements, have argued that until relatively recently, academic observers have managed to ‘ignore the swirl of passions all around them in political life’. Where emotions have been acknowledged, they have tended to be sidelined as negative and/or irrational. There has been a tendency, then, to ignore or even deny the pivotal role that emotions have played in politics. In the reluctance to attempt to access the ‘murky, dangerous, and pejorative’ area of human emotions – to understand both the intersecting reason and passion of political life – what has been left out of these academic studies is, Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta say, ‘the [very] stuff of politics’.

Yet, the spontaneous as well as strategic presence of the emotions in politics is abundant and it permeates all sides of the political divide. Certainly, emotions played a pivotal role in feminist and anti-feminist campaigns of the early twentieth century. Shame – a particularly gendered emotion – was employed heavily in radical and conservative discourse. In England, for example, home of a vast empire, concerns about the imminent fall of that empire meant that shame was employed in a bitter anti-feminist campaign that stressed the importance of imperial concerns over the demands of agitating feminists.

But what of Ireland where opinions about the potential fall of the British Empire were for many diametrically opposed to those prevailing in England and where nationalist aspirations were urgent, even violent? Here too women were agitating for the vote. Given the very different but still potent mix of politics, how was shame employed by those opposed to female suffrage? Or, was it more a tool of radical feminism? In a heady atmosphere where feminist concerns increasingly gave way to nationalist priorities, how was shame employed in radical feminist discourse? How did radical feminists who shared a nationalist vision with nationalist men react to what was perceived to be a conservative streak in radical Irish activism?