

TNA ACTIVITY REPORT

GRAPHS OF THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF SPANISH WOMEN WRITERS OF IRISH DESCENT IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Author: Patricia García Sánchez-Migallón
Current position: Profesora Tutora
Affiliation: UNED (Madrid)
Host institution: Institute Moore, University of Galway
Mentor(s): Dr. Emily Ridge
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Presentation

Several women writers of recognized prestige in Spain, born during the 18th century, had Irish ancestry and, in some cases, we know of the existence of family and personal relationships that still connected them with their country of origin. The project proposes to explore, on the basis of the personal connections that can be traced through documents and literary-historical works, the different visualizations of their relationship graphs.

Furthermore, the overall aim of the project is to validate the method of social network analysis in historical and philological research, as a method from which we extract first-rate research information as it shows us in a visual and effective way the similarities or differences between the different cases studied.

The historical context in Ireland is somewhat particular. In 1689, under the reign of James II, the last Irish Parliament was convened in Dublin until 1921 with Catholic members. Two years later, the Irish army fighting against William of Orange in support of James II surrendered through the Treaty of Limerick and swore allegiance to the new king. After the Treaty of Limerick most Irishmen who considered themselves Gaelic left their country for good (possibly the ancestry of the women writers emigrated at this time or somewhat later). In the years between the signing of the Treaty of Limerick and 1800, numerous revolts took place, Gaelic culture was driven underground, and groupings emerged that would gradually polarize the population, such as the United Irishmen (Catholics) and the Orange Order (Protestants).

In Spain, in contrast to the previous century, the 18th century was a time of recovery and reform in many areas of Spanish life. The War of Succession caused Spain to lose power to other European countries. In this century, Spanish foreign policy was marked by the alliance



with France, where the Bourbons ruled, and by struggles with the new power that became England.

Research questions

The main hypothesis to be corroborated is whether the relationships maintained that connected them with their country of origin helped them in the publication of their works and, in each particular case, whether this help may have been motivated by the aim of disseminating enlightenment ideas. More specifically, we can formulate them as follows:

- Did the Irish ancestry of these women help bring them into contact with Enlightenment ideas?
- Are their family relationships important to their literary production?

In principle, the project will focus on the figures of Margarita Hickey, Inés Joyes y Blake, María Gertrudis Hore, Frasquita Larrea and her daughter, Cecilia Böhl de Faber y Ruiz de Larrea.

Methodology

A social network is a finite set of actors, called nodes, all linked by one or a few specific ties. Social network analysis offers a distinct perspective within the social sciences and humanities, based on the assumption of the central importance of the relationships between interacting units. Within the broad field of data analysis, the study of social networks, based on the principles of social psychology, studies the existing relationships between agents, people or organizations, to observe their structure and draw conclusions. The egocentric focus the study on a person and his or her network of contacts, organizations, interests... In the case of women writers, the network methodology has offered new perspectives in the study of women's writing because of its capacity to link information that was previously barely structured due to the frequent lack of data on women and their contexts of action. Many investigations focus their efforts on showing a high number of nodes related to the main node, instead of focusing efforts on the relationships between the different nodes in order to advance the interpretative quality and delve into the relationships between different egocentric networks.

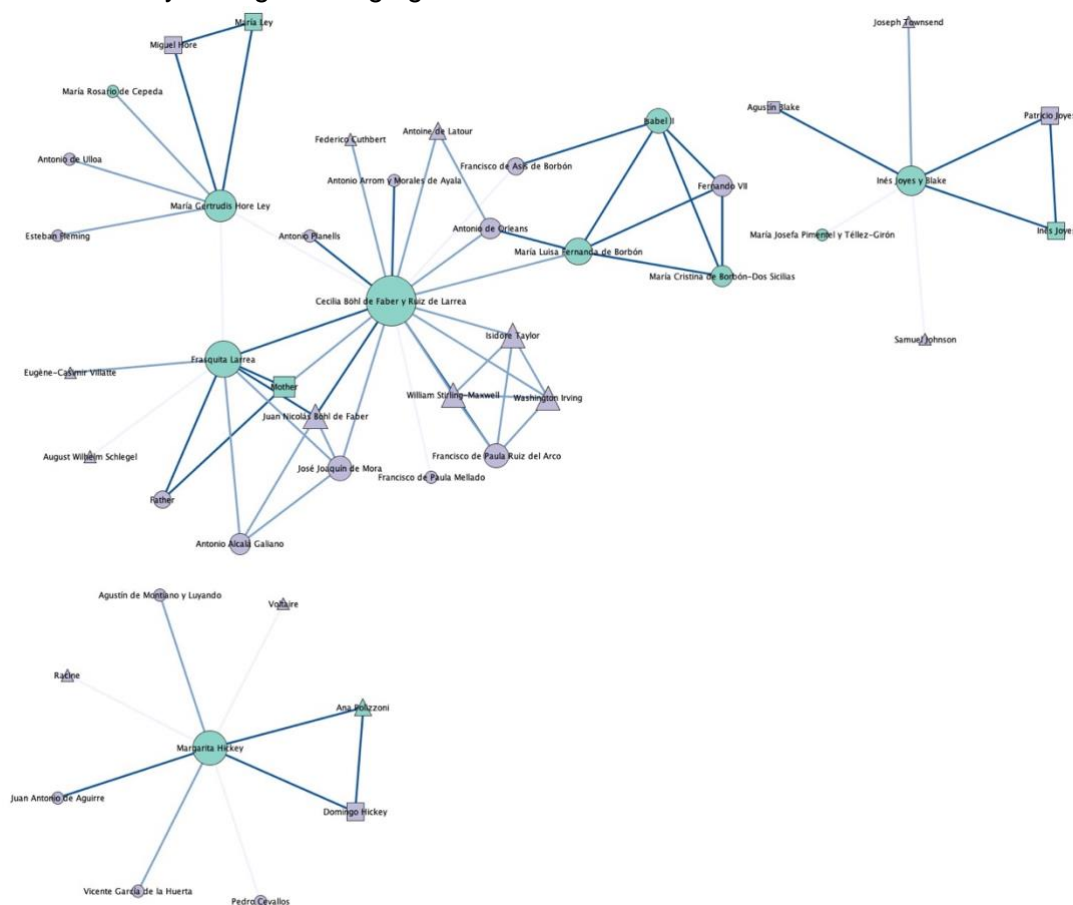
The methodological approach of networks is especially profitable in the analysis of women writers because women's writing is often studied as a genre dissociated from the very social and literary context of which it is a part, simply because of the category "sex" of the writer, a premise that would be critically unacceptable for any other common characteristic.

For the graphical representation of the networks, the VISONNE program is used; this tool was chosen because of its power to clearly represent medium-sized networks. Mode 1 networks are formed so that all nodes are people and, on the other hand, the relationships between them are considered to be undirected. To further clarify the type of relationship between the nodes, a weight or intensity is determined to these relationships, which can be of three types. The editorial, epistolary or intellectual relationship is the one with the least weight, since it is the one that implies that both persons did not maintain a relationship in person, but that they related through their works, letters, ideas, etc. The second in importance would be the personal relationship of friendship or close relationship and, finally, the most important relationship is considered to be the family relationship. In the graph the weight of the relationships is represented by the saturation of the color of the line that joins the nodes. The attributes considered for each node are gender and nationality. These attributes have been

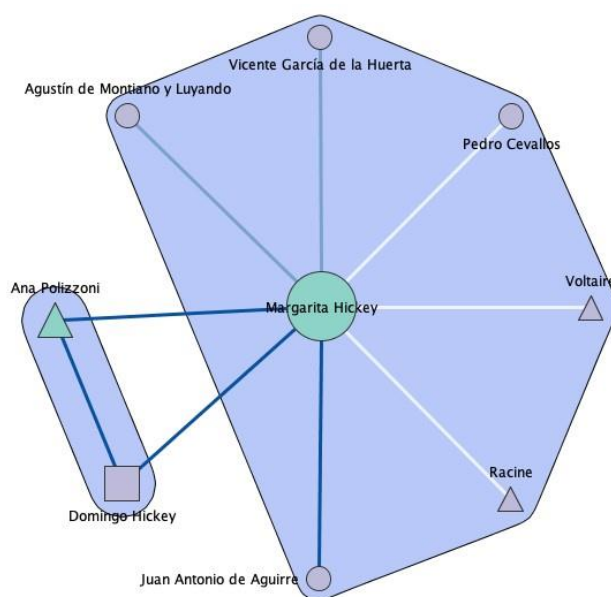
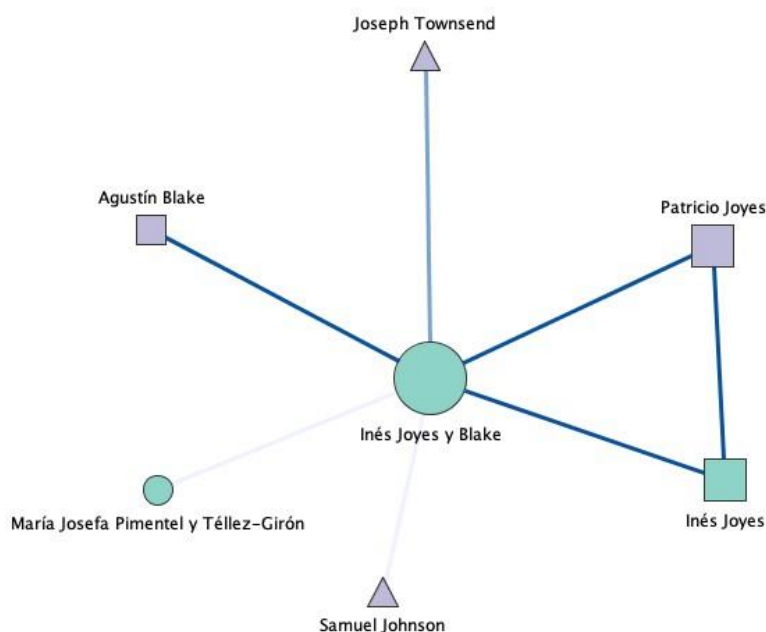
reflected in the graph in different ways. First, the color of the node varies according to gender: men are represented in violet and women in green. The shape of the node depends on their nationality to see the relationships between Spanish and Irish people in a quick way. The nodes of the Spanish people are circular, while those of the Irish are square and, of the other nationalities, they are triangular without distinction (French, English, German...). It is important to note that there are many different nationalities compared to other social networks of female writers of the same period without these family ties to Ireland.

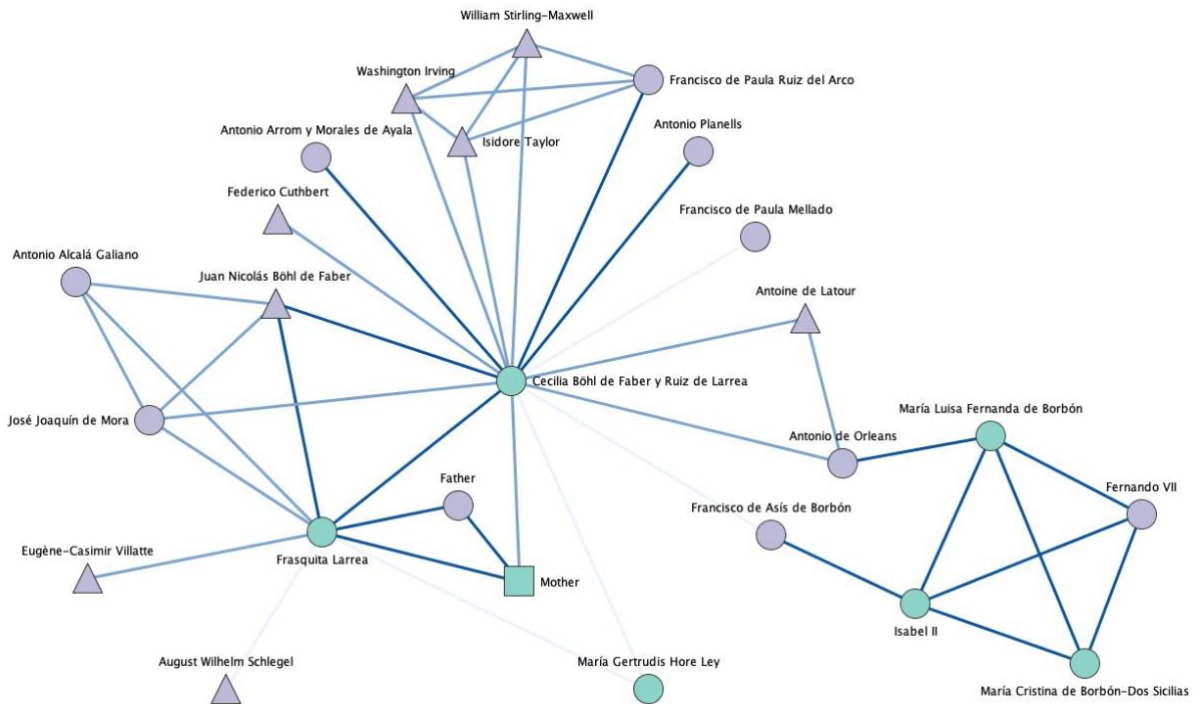
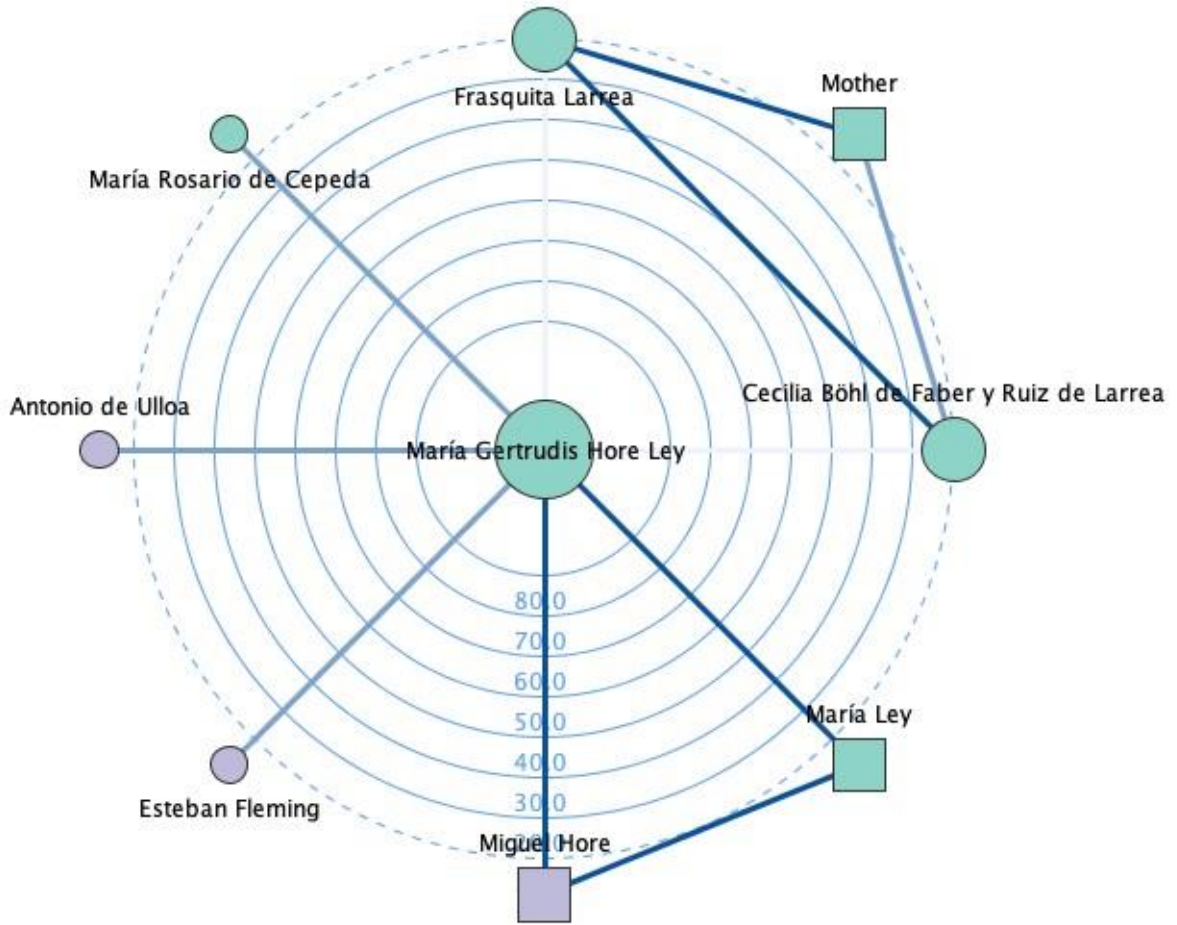
Provisional Results

In this way we have created a small network as it contains 49 nodes with 66 links. If we look at the network indicators we can see that the density of the network is 5.6% which tells us about the low connectivity it has, each graph of a writer has a shape close to a star due to the very high degree of centrality of the author, who is connected with almost all the nodes, this is what we call a central actor (their degree is much higher than the average degree). Degree centrality is the number of actors with which a node is linked; it is a measure of centrality that groups actors by the number of adjacent relationships. A consequence of this is the high degree of centralization index (is the variation in vertex degrees divided by the maximum degree variation that is possible in a network of the same size) and the high degree of betweenness centrality of the writers (betweenness centrality is based on the frequency with which a point is between pairs of other points on the shortest or geodesic path to connect them); in other words, the most common geodesic path to join two unconnected nodes together is usually through a bridging actor.

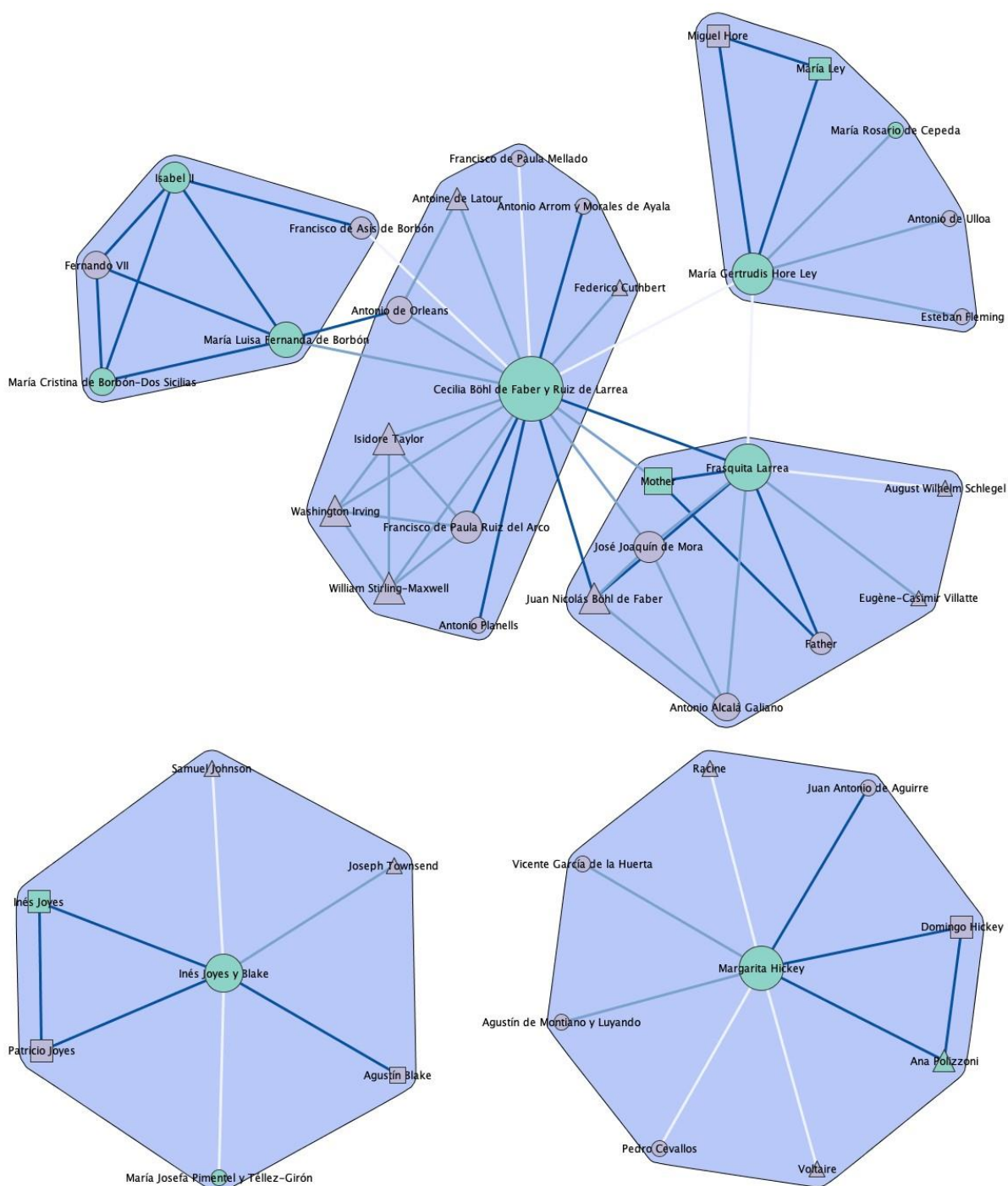


In addition to the general graph, the particular graphs of each writer and graphs that allow a quick visualization of the betweenness centrality and the clusters have been created. These data show that due to the low connectivity in the absence of certain nodes, the network would be facing a structural hole. While it is true that the density of the network is an indicator that decreases in a non-proportional way as the size of the network increases because, while the number of possible links is proportional to the size of the network, the probability that an individual has of forming links with others is not.





Another suggestive element to look at in the network is the degree of modularity which, despite the indicators given, it is possible to see a network of sub-networks from the graphs studied. It measures the ease with which a network can be decomposed into modular communities; a high level of modularity indicates a sophisticated internal structure. This structure, often called community structure, describes how the network is compartmentalized into subnetworks. These subnetworks (or communities) have been shown to have real-world meaning. We have adapted the graph representation to determine the clusters and obtain what we observe here. In graph theory, the clustering coefficient is the measure of the degree to which nodes in a graph tend to cluster together.



Activities

The research activities that have been carried out are as follows:

- 1) Collection of biographical data on each of the authors and data on their social environment and relationships:
 - a. Reading of digitalised documents such as letters, manuscripts or paratexts that provide information on the social relations of the authors.
 - b. Reading of digitalised journals, works and secondary bibliography.
 - c. Search and reading of bibliography in the library of the University of Galway.
- 2) Preparation of a state of the question on the relations and population movements, especially female, between Ireland and Spain.
 - a. Reading of digitalised journals, works and secondary bibliography.
 - b. Search and reading of bibliography in the library of the University of Galway.
- 3) Meetings with Dr. Emily Ridge to share the methodology used and open up possible avenues of research interest.
- 4) TNA talk at the University of Galway.
- 5) Networking with other postdocs and researchers at the University of Galway to share different tools used in the field of DH.
- 6) Elaboration of the graphs with VISIONE.
- 7) Analysis of the results obtained and reflection on possible areas for improvement of the ongoing research.
- 8) Dissemination of the development of the project in social media.

Timing

Below is a timeline showing the correspondence between the activities listed in the previous section and the four weeks of the TNA fellow.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Activity 1				
Activity 2				
Activity 3				
Activity 4				
Activity 5				
Activity 6				
Activity 7				
Activity 8				

Spread of research

The following activities have been carried out to disseminate and publicise the project:

- TNA Talk at the University of Galway on 28 May 2024. Also accessible through Zoom. Here the presentation: <https://view.genially.com/66537ef708d2e500158d3cf2>
- Dissemination of the development of the project in the Twitter account of @literatricia.
- Dissemination of the development of the project in the Hypotheses academic blog: <https://desenfilol.hypotheses.org/>

Future work

To finalise the research, some more data still needs to be collected in Spanish libraries and new graph visualisations need to be tested. Once this has been done, it is envisaged to finalise the project with a written work. Currently, it is being considered whether it would be better to write a small monograph on the subject or to disseminate it in writing by means of two articles in a high impact journal.

The project will also be disseminated at an academic meeting in the academic year 2024-2025, probably at the XXII Congress of the International Association of Hispanists (Chile, AIH). Likewise, the research will continue to be disseminated on social networks and on the academic blog.

Tentative conclusions

We can answer the questions posed at the beginning and draw some tentative conclusions:

- It does not seem that family relationships are so decisive for the literary production of the authors, but rather the relationships that their family established with the local powers. That is to say, what does positively influence their work are the relationships with the powers that be and the relevance of those friendships for their social status.
- These relationships led the women writers studied on many occasions to be able to interact in international intellectual circles where they came into contact with the ideas of the Enlightenment. In other words, they participated in or organized literary gatherings, many of them being salonières.
- The Irish ancestry of these women was decisive in their intellectual development, basically because of their mastery of the English language. The fact that they were able to read European texts (whether or not they were in their original version) and have access to these ideas before they were introduced in Spain or translated into Spanish can be considered relevant to their work.
- All of them worked as translators and most of them used pseudonyms to disseminate their works.

But these conclusions will need to be nuanced and reformulated at the end of the project, which is currently still a work in progress.