



UCD Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland

Seminar Series 2018 – 2019

**5pm Thursday 20 September 2018
Room K114, School of History, UCD**

Diagnosing Insanity: Women, Murder and Mental Health in 20th-Century Ireland

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**MURDER BY
A MANIAC**

Mad, bad, sad – the familiar tropes deployed to explain women who kill. This paper explores the cases of three women who were convicted of murder in post-independence Ireland and who were understood through discourses of pathology. Taking these three cases, we can begin to see the ways in which ‘madness’ was applied at the individual level. The archival files demonstrate how diagnoses were contingent and inseparable from prevailing conceptions of gender, morality and class. The cases reveal the behaviours categorised as ‘sane’ and ‘insane’, routes to redemption, and the work of respectable femininity as a protective factor.