This book examines the lives of Irish women between 1890 and 1914, tracing the shift of their labor out of the fields and into the home. Joanna Bourke shows how, in this period, women's position within the employment market deteriorated: married women came to be increasingly dependent on their husbands' earnings, while economic opportunities for unmarried and widowed women collapsed. More and more women devoted all their productive enterprise to performing housework. This documented study analyses the crucial elements in this change: the coincidence of sectoral shifts in the employment market, increasing investment in the rural economy, and the growth of a labour-intensive household sector. Controversially, the book argues that Irish women welcomed their altered role, finding housework preferable to many of the other options available to them.