

Gendering Bodies: Violence as Performance in Ireland's War of Independence  
(1919-1921)

Gabrielle Machnik-Kékesi  
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By: Gabrielle Machnik-Kékesi

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Signed by the final Examining Committee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair  
Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Jane McGaughey

\_\_\_\_\_ Examiner  
Dr. Emer O'Toole

\_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor  
Dr. Gavin Foster

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl, Program Director

\_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Paula Wood-Adams, Dean of Faculty

\_\_\_\_\_ 2017

**ABSTRACT:**

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Gabrielle Machnik-Kékesi, MA  
Concordia University, 2017

This thesis argues that constructs of gender underpinned violence on women in the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921). These acts were not only informed by female victims' perceived gender, but also performed Crown Force and the Irish Republican Army perpetrators' view of their own gendered roles and duties, as well as attitudes towards masculinity and war. Using the historiography of the Irish Revolution (1912-1923) as well as gender and performance studies literature – namely Critical Discourse Analysis and the early work of Judith Butler – this paper provides an account of how gender was imagined and experienced by the 'revolutionary generation' on the eve of this formative decade in Ireland's history. Using source material including witness statements, police reports, and military memoranda, this thesis then details how gendered violence on women – physical, psychological and sexual – 'performed' the military masculine identities of Crown Forces and the Irish Republican Army respectively. By examining this aspect of Irish women's experiences during the War of Independence, this thesis seeks to contribute to the ongoing undertaking of gendering the historiography of the Revolution.

Keywords: Ireland; War of Independence; Gender; Violence; Performance; Revolution; Sexual Violence.

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## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In an interview for the *Irish Examiner* on September 12, 2017, Professor Linda Connolly commented on the abundance of research related to women's participation in the Easter 1916 Rising, a week-long uprising against British rule that took place in Dublin, in the midst of World War I. In speaking of historiographical tendencies, Connolly suggests that “[a] lot of the focus [on] 1916 was, quite rightly, about the role of women as combatants. [...] But we also need to look at men and women as civilians, and as victims, which is just as important as the militaristic history.”<sup>1</sup> The article goes on to remind readers that this is not an entirely novel call to action. Sociologist Louise Ryan concluded her 2000 article “‘Drunken Tans’: Representations of Sex and Violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921)” by saying, “there is at least sufficient material to begin to reassess the gendered nature of violence during the Irish War of Independence.”<sup>2</sup> Since Ryan's article, a great deal of scholarship has been produced about women's history and experiences as agents of political and social change, and as combatants. “But still,” Connolly's interviewer states, “the question of sexual and other violence suffered by women in Ireland's War of Independence and Civil War” is not often discussed.<sup>3</sup>

To contribute to the literature relevant to these concerns and debates, this thesis focuses on women as victims of Crown Force and Irish Republican Army (IRA) violence during the War of Independence (1919-1921). Before explaining the

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<sup>1</sup> Niall Murphy, “The rarely spoken about violence suffered by women during the Irish revolution,” *The Irish Examiner*, September 12, 2017. Accessed September 13, 2017. Stable URL:

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/features/the-people-calling-for-more-examination-of-sexual-violence-suffered-by-women-during-the-irish-revolution-458772.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

theoretical and historiographical literatures that assist in this study, a brief overview of the War of Independence is required. After centuries of militant nationalist initiatives, nationalism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland was initially mobilized through the constitutionalist aims and initiatives of Charles Stewart Parnell<sup>4</sup> and the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), known as the Home Rule movement. Unionist groups concentrated in the North, for whom cultural, national and economic attachment to Britain formed integral pillars of their identity, opposed the prospect of Irish Home Rule. These tensions climaxed in the Third Home Rule Crisis in 1912-1914, which saw a Home Rule Bill finally pass the gatekeeping of the House of Lords.<sup>5</sup> A Unionist paramilitary body, the Ulster Volunteer Force, provided physical might to the opposition of Home Rule's imposition on the North. Nationalists responded in kind with the Irish Volunteers quickly mobilizing and arming amidst this tense uncertainty.<sup>6</sup>

However, national and constitutional concerns were not the only issues occupying the minds of Irish men and women in the early twentieth century. Labour and class bore on the consciousness of the so-called “revolutionary generation,” producing the violent 1913 Dublin Lockout, when a labour dispute between business tycoon William Martin Murphy's Dublin Employers' Federation and Jim Larkin's Irish Transport and General Workers Union saw 20,000 Dublin workers locked out.<sup>7</sup> The Lockout underscores the importance of the class conflict that was part of the changes

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<sup>4</sup> Parnell died in 1891, but his party's support for his constitutional nationalist aims continued after his death. See F.S. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> See James McConnel, *The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> See Eóin MacNeill, “The North Began” for a contemporary articulation arguing for Home Rule, and in defense of the establishment of the Irish Volunteers.

<sup>7</sup> See Roy Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015).

underway. Class, like gender and sexuality, are vital intersections in historicizing the past's people and events. Women like Dr. Kathleen Lynn, a member of the Irish Citizen Army and, Marie Perolz, a founding member of the Cumann na mBan pre-cursor Inghinidhe na hÉireann, were simultaneously “socialists, republicans and feminists.”<sup>8</sup> In the words of Padraig Yeates, “during the Lockout people ranging from female suffrage campaigners to Catholic curates began to question in fundamental ways what sort of society home rule Ireland would be,” securing the Lockout's status as the “first major urban conflict to impinge itself on the national consciousness.”<sup>9</sup>

The events of World War I are equally important context to the Irish Revolution. A Home Rule Act entered on Westminster's statute books at the outbreak of the Great War, which polarized nationalists and unionists. In the southern part of the island, the political scene was grappling with issues surrounding Home Rule. Home Rule nationalists who believed participation in the British war effort would show good faith and would further secure Home Rule fell out with a minority who rejected the war as an imperialist conflict over foreign concerns. The latter, an Irish Republican Brotherhood-led faction, saw the war as an opportunity to strike during Britain's time of vulnerability, using the Irish Volunteer Force, nominally lead by Éoin Mac Neill. In the North, Unionist opinion was solidly in favour of war participation.<sup>10</sup> The Ulster Volunteer

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<sup>8</sup> Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 110.

<sup>9</sup> Padraig Yeates, “The Dublin 1913 Lockout,” *History Ireland* 9.2 (Summer 2001): 36, accessed July 7, 2016, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27724881>.

<sup>10</sup> See ATQ Stewart, *The Shape of Irish History* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 168-170.

Force made up the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division and played an integral role in the Great War, namely at the Somme.<sup>11</sup>

After the Third Home Rule Bill and Britain's entry in the War, the next major conflict to "impinge itself on the national consciousness" was undoubtedly the 1916 Easter Rising.<sup>12</sup> This weeklong rebellion, wrongly assumed by authorities to be the work of the increasingly popular political group Sinn Féin – a political umbrella for the various advanced nationalist organizations – saw the Volunteers, the IRB, the ICA and Cumann na mBan occupy strategic locations across Dublin after Patrick Pearse's reading of the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Ireland outside the General Post Office. While a military "fiasco," it signalled a pendulum shift "in the world of Irish nationalism, away from Home Rule to complete independence."<sup>13</sup>

In the years following the Rising, perhaps the most important development instigated by World War I in Ireland was the 1918 Conscription Crisis. On April 16th 1918, an exhausted Britain, seeing the number of available and eligible men it could funnel into its war effort rapidly diminishing, rushed a new conscription bill "through Westminster not only raising the age of exemption [for service], but also empowering the British Government to extend conscription to Ireland by an Order in Council."<sup>14</sup>

Liam Deasy, Commandant of the West Cork Brigade of the IRA during the War of Independence, remembered the effect in Ireland as "electric."<sup>15</sup> Broad-based nationalist

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<sup>11</sup> Jane McGaughey, *Ulster's Men: Protestant Unionist Masculinities and Militarization in the North of Ireland, 1912-1923* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 83.

<sup>12</sup> Yeates, "The Dublin 1913 Lockout," 36.

<sup>13</sup> Francis J. Costello, *The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath, 1916-1923: Years of Revolt* (Dublin and Portland: Irish Academic Press, 2003), 20.

<sup>14</sup> Liam Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free – The Authentic History of the Fight in West Cork 1917-1921* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1973), 18-19.

<sup>15</sup> Deasy, 19.

sentiment was rapidly mobilized in opposition to the proposed forced conscription but it was Sinn Féin that “dominated anti-conscription meetings and paramilitary rallies, complete with pledges of resistance and pointed denunciations of the [...] police.”<sup>16</sup> As a result of this initiative, the support of Labour, the Church and subsequently the IPP, conscription was never successfully enforced in Ireland.<sup>17</sup> Immediately following the 1918 armistice, Sinn Féin won a landslide victory in Ireland during the United Kingdom General Election in December 1918 on an abstentionist platform – whereby elected Sinn Féin MPs would refrain from taking their seats in Parliament by way of protest, honouring the “principles of the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of 1916.”<sup>18</sup>

“As the dawn of 1919 approached,” Deasy recalled feeling as if the Irish people were “at the threshold of a new and decisive era in [their] history.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, both political and military initiatives were launched to further challenge British control of Ireland. Acting on the people’s desire for “self-determination” as represented by the General Election results, Sinn Féin abstained from Westminster and established an Irish parliament, Dáil Éireann, in Dublin on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1919.<sup>20</sup> Fearing that the Volunteers were to become a mere “adjunct to the Sinn Féin political organization, on the very same day, Dan Breen along with other members of the Tipperary Volunteer movement

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies – Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 85.

<sup>17</sup> It remains true that World War I had an “enormous impact” on Ireland, as many Irishmen and women offered their service to the war effort. “Although the numbers of Irish involved are still contested, official estimates stand at 210,000 mobilized and 49,300 dead.” See Fiona Fitzsimons’ piece on Irish participation in foreign wars “Tracing the Irish In The American Civil War,” *History Ireland* 22.6 (Nov.-Dec. 2014): 17.

<sup>18</sup> Deasy, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.

ambushed a group of Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), the Irish police force, killing two officers at Soloheadbeg.”<sup>21</sup> According to historian Richard English, “by the end of 1919 all the ingredients of a guerrilla war were in place.”<sup>22</sup> To subdue the “illegal” Dáil and the Irish Republican Army’s escalating violence, “large military and Black and Tan reinforcements”, mostly composed of demobilized World War I soldiers, so-called for their mismatched uniforms, “poured into Ireland to suppress the elected Parliament [and] the people.”<sup>23</sup> The IRA carried out raids, ambushes and assassinations, seeking to chip away at British resolve and morale. A cycle of reprisals soon ensued between the IRA and Crown Forces, with some loyalist paramilitary activity in the North. On the political front, the Dáil had established the foundations for a functioning state, including creating courts and local government initiatives. By autumn 1920, however, the number of police and arrests was rising, in addition to the increased “likelihood of conviction[, ...] imprisonment” and death for republican activists.<sup>24</sup> Many IRA men consequently went “on the run,” mobilizing in full-time flying column units, made up of a few dozen men, while IRA counter-intelligence targeted British intelligence, most notably on “Bloody Sunday,” November 21, 1920.<sup>25</sup>

Contemporary reports to outside bodies demonstrate how the War of Independence was deeply impacting the population.<sup>26</sup> Referring to the Crown Forces’ campaign as a “terrorist policy,” the Irish White Cross and American Committee for Relief in Ireland’s 1922 Report claimed that “more than 1,000 houses [including]

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<sup>21</sup> English, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Hart, *The IRA at War 1916-1923*, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Tom Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Dublin: Anvil Books, 1981), 12.

<sup>24</sup> Hart, *The IRA & Its Enemies*, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 88-91.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

homesteads, shops, [and] farm-buildings had been destroyed,” while “many people had been killed or maimed, or dragged from their families to be confined in prisons or internment camps.”<sup>27</sup> “As a result of this violence ... about 100,000 people [were] reduced to destitution.”<sup>28</sup>

By July 1921, both sides of the conflict agreed to a Truce, which later resulted in the signing of a treaty. The Articles of Agreement for a Treaty Between Great Britain and Ireland officially established the Irish Free State. Disagreement over the Treaty’s terms served to cause a monumental split in the republican movement, and the beginning of the Civil War.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> W.J. Williams, *Report of the Irish White Cross to 31 August 1922* (Dublin: Martin Lester, Ltd., 1922), 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> Hopkinson, *The Irish War of Independence*, 173.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

### i. Historiography of the Irish Revolution:

Historian Aidan Beatty claims, “the period between 1912 and 1923 is the most heavily privileged in modern<sup>30</sup> Irish history.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the current decade of centenary anniversaries commemorating the Irish Revolution (1912-1923)<sup>32</sup> has inspired community, academic and state-organized remembrance activities, recently and most notably the numerous events centered on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising.<sup>33</sup> The last several years have also seen a marked increase in the publication of scholarly histories of the revolutionary period. These publications are contributions to an already extensive literature comprising the Revolution’s historiography. Examples include Francis J. Costello’s *The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath, 1916-1923: Years of Revolt* (Irish Academic Press, 2011), *The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) edited by Joost Augusteijn and Marie Coleman’s *The Irish Revolution, 1916-1923* (Routledge, 2014) – as well as the slightly more narrowly focused *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers and the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* by Augusteijn (Irish Academic Press, 1996) and Peter Hart’s *The IRA at War 1916-1923* (Oxford University Press, 2003) – link the political, military and social events of early twentieth century

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<sup>30</sup> Depending on how “modern” is defined, the numerous studies of the Great Famine and the 1798 Rebellion might challenge this claim. Nonetheless, the Revolution is certainly a heavily studied period.

<sup>31</sup> Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938 – Gender and Sexualities in History Series* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.

<sup>32</sup> Dating for this period varies. Some historians opt to begin this period with the 1916 Easter Rising, and others end with the 1922 establishment of the Irish Free State. This study will use the 1912 Home Rule Bill and the end of the Civil War in 1923 as temporal bookends, while focusing on the period from 1919-1921.

<sup>33</sup> Including an Irish Research Council-funded conference organized by Linda Connolly related to “women’s experiences of feminism, violence and nationalism from 1917 to 1923,” which took place in September 2017.

Ireland under the umbrella of Revolution, suggesting a narrative flow or a comprehensive unit.

Other subgenres of Irish revolutionary studies have opted for more focused studies in place and time. In the socio-geographical piece *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Barnes and Noble Books, 1977), Erhard Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn mapped guerrilla operations and British reprisals by county to determine the scope and pace of activity during the war.<sup>34</sup> David Fitzpatrick's pioneering article "The Geography of Irish Nationalism 1910-1921," established the "geographical distribution of revolutionary violence" by plotting "killings attributed to the rebels by Dublin Castle which were committed between January 1919 and May 1921, raids on the post undertaken between May 1920 and November 1920 and, as an indicator of potential rather than actual violence, rifles known by IRA headquarters to be in local hands late in 1921."<sup>35</sup>

Geographically focused on the Irish county, "county studies" have inspired some of the field's most controversial and dynamic debates. Most notably, the late Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford University Press, 1998)<sup>36</sup> offered a provocative revisionist interpretation of the nature of revolutionary violence, putting forth theses with which both county and more general

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<sup>34</sup> Erhard Rumpf and A.C. Hepburn, *Nationalism and Socialism in Twentieth Century Ireland* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1977).

<sup>35</sup> David Fitzpatrick, "The Geography of Irish Nationalism 1910-1923," *Past and Present*, 78 (Feb. 1978): 117, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/650375>.

<sup>36</sup> Other noteworthy County Studies include Marie Coleman's *County Longford and the Irish Revolution 1910-1923* (Dublin & Portland, Irish Academic Press, 2002); Michael Farry's *The Irish Revolution in Sligo, 1912-1923* (Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2012); and Pat McCarthy's *Waterford – The Irish Revolution, 1912-1923 Series* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015).

studies alike are still contending.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, while not academic sources, popular accounts like the “Fighting Stories” series present another important component of revolutionary historiography, and have been republished with scholarly introductions.<sup>38</sup>

Opting for temporal frameworks rather than regional boundaries in methodological approach, a significant body of revolutionary work is dedicated to more detailed accounts of particular events during the decade-long Revolution. Of specific concern to this thesis are those texts devoted to reconstructing the history of the War of Independence. Memoirs like Tom Barry’s *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Anvil Books, 1981) and Dan Breen’s *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Anvil Books, 1993) highlight the important tradition of the soldier memoir during this period. D.M. Leeson’s *The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in Irish War of Independence* (Oxford University Press, 2011), Charles Townshend’s *The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-1921* (Oxford University Press, 1975), John Borgonovo’s *Spies, Informers and the “Anti-Sinn Féin Society”: The Intelligence War in Cork City 1920-1921* (Irish

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<sup>37</sup> *The IRA and its Enemies*’ most controversial contributions to the debate surrounding the dynamics of revolutionary violence are undoubtedly Hart’s proposal that the Kilmichael Ambush did not involve any false surrender, and that Protestants were victims of sectarian violence, specifically targeted by the IRA. According to Hart, despite the fact that “Kilmichael was a brave, daring, and even brilliant ambush[,] it turned into a massacre.” (37) This escalation of violence (and version of events) cannot be explained by the presence or absence of notable figures nor by adherence to a well-defined republican ideology, but rather by a “tit-for-tat cycle” involving “the overriding motive of revenge, the ability of anonymous gunmen on either side to do what they liked, the frequently random or mistaken choice in victims, and their helplessness.” (79) It is in this “atmosphere of fear and polarization” that “Protestants had become ‘fair game’ because they were seen as outsiders and enemies...” (290) According to *The IRA and its Enemies*, in some cases “informers” and “spies” were killed not for their treasonous activities, but for their faith. Several historians have scrupulously criticized this characterization of revolutionary violence, such as Meda Ryan in *Tom Barry: IRA Freedom Fighter* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2005); John Borgonovo’s *Spies, Informers and the ‘Anti-Sinn Féin Society’: The Intelligence War in Cork City 1920-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007); and John Regan’s “The ‘Bandon Valley Massacre’ as a Historical Problem,” *History – The Journal of the Historical Association*, 97.325 (Jan. 2012): 70-98, accessed October 25, 2017, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-229X.2011.00542.x.

<sup>38</sup> In addition to *Rebel Cork’s Fighting Story 1916-1921 – Told By The Men Who Made It* (Mercier Press, 2009) edited by Brian Ó Conchubhair and introduced by Hart, Mercier Press published new editions of the Fighting Stories of Dublin (introduced by D. Ferriter), Limerick (introduced by Ruán O’Donnell), and Kerry (introduced by J.J. Lee) in the same year.

Academic Press, 2007) and the late Michael Hopkinson's *The Irish War of Independence* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) have fleshed out our understanding of the themes and undercurrents particular to the years 1919-1921 that propelled this moment of nation-forging, including reprisals, the intelligence war, and the guerrilla conflict.

Further, thematic subgenres have emerged within revolutionary historiography, which opt for the exploration of a specific concept or subject, such as revolutionary violence. The Irish historical record has been written in a way that sometimes justifies certain problematic myths about the actors behind, and targets of, revolutionary violence, in addition to reasons for its nature and utility, that can and should be questioned. Some members of the "Trinity School" (those who completed graduate studies under Fitzpatrick's supervision) have taken up this challenge and have dramatically reoriented discussions of the dynamics of revolutionary violence. The most influential, and indeed most contentious, of these scholars remains Peter Hart.<sup>39</sup> Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies* claims that "many lives were destroyed other than by bullets," including "beatings, raids, kidnappings, torture, arson, robbery, and vandalism."<sup>40</sup> Hart calculated that "between 1917 and 1923, 7500 people were killed or wounded in Ireland."<sup>41</sup> Hart's work makes important advances in widening the analytical category of violence, while postulating several theses about the nature of revolutionary violence, which the field continues to contemplate, nuance, challenge and sometimes refute.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The "Trinity School" has been associated with a "revisionist" history of the Revolution.

<sup>40</sup> Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies*, 51.

<sup>41</sup> Hart, *The IRA at War 1916-1923*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> See Anne Dolan, "The British Culture of Paramilitary Violence in the Irish War of Independence," in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe After the Great War*, eds. Robert Gerwath and John

*Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Lilliput Press, 2012), edited by Fitzpatrick, confronts “major unsettled questions about the legacy of terror.”<sup>43</sup> The volume sets out to reframe readers’ understanding of the human experience of war and the many faces of revolutionary violence. By striving to communicate the breadth and degree of suffering on all sides, *Terror in Ireland* challenges readers to consider the humanity of the Revolution's many victims. Nonetheless, the anthology's focus on the contentious subjective concept of “terror” also points to some of the issues that may arise in employing violence as a category of analysis. As a whole, the collection focuses on more sensationalist episodes of republican violence rather than paying equal attention to state violence, be it Free State, Northern Irish government and or British Crown Force violence.<sup>44</sup> Concentrating on graphic details, as opposed to the political and military contexts that can serve to explain violent acts, risks depoliticizing the narrative, and can result in exaggerating the scale of the violence.<sup>45</sup>

Moreover, while not dedicated to the War of Independence, Gemma Clark’s *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), Townshend’s *Political Violence in Ireland – Government and Resistance in Ireland Since 1848* (Oxford University Press, 1985), Ronan Fanning’s *Fatal Path: British Government and Irish Revolution 1910-1922* (Faber & Faber, 2013) as well as Daithí Ó Corráin and Eunan O’Halpin’s forthcoming publication titled *The Dead of the Irish*

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Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 200-215 for another analysis of the dynamics of violence during the War of Independence.

<sup>43</sup> David Fitzpatrick ed., *Terror in Ireland 1916-1923* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2012), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Jane Leonard’s “‘English Dogs’ or ‘Poor Devils’? The Dead of Bloody Sunday Morning” showcases the issues surrounding this sensationalism. Leonard details the gruesome, bodily particulars of each fatality on Bloody Sunday. While impressively thorough, what does this serve in advancing discussion related to motivation, consequence, or dynamics of violence? See *Terror in Ireland*, 106-110.

<sup>45</sup> See John M. Regan, “The History of the Last Atrocity,” *The Dublin Review of Books*, 22 (Summer 2012).

*Revolution* also crucially account for how change was enacted “through violent action.”<sup>46</sup>

## ii. Gender History

Some of these pieces – particularly Clark’s<sup>47</sup> – attempt to intersect the study of ethno-religious conflict and violence with the study of gender. With its roots in social history and more specifically women’s history, many scholars have contributed to a strong body of literature in Irish gender history, which provide important theoretical and empirical scaffolding for further explorations of gender and revolutionary violence.<sup>48</sup> This thesis borrows from Sonya Rose’s definition of gender history, that is the scholarly reconstruction of “what it means to be defined as a man or as a woman,” an account of the “sexual difference” between these, and an exploration of this difference’s impact on given time and place in history.<sup>49</sup>

Thought-provoking scholarship produced since the 1980s has contributed to “doing the work” of gendering the history of Ireland, a process which not only brings awareness to women’s participation and experience, but also unpacks the gender constructs and relations at the heart of structures, movements and events that create history. This entails a reconceptualization of the theories and methods we use to understand the historical narrative. Much of Ireland’s gender history has indeed been written by women. Key works include Margaret Mac Curtain’s *Ariadne’s Thread* –

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<sup>46</sup> Gemma Clark, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 16.

<sup>47</sup> See Clark, *Everyday Violence*, 156 & 172-173 for content specifically related to the War of Independence. For instance, the author analyzes the importance of the “female space” the domestic setting of many instances of sexual violence.

<sup>48</sup> See Sonya Rose, *What is Gender History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

*Writing Women into Irish History* (Syracuse University Press, 2003), a collection of the author's pioneering 1980s and 1990s essays that stretch back to the early modern period, and focuses on Irish religious women's history, Margaret Ward's *Unmanageable Revolutionaries – Women and Irish Nationalism* (Pluto Press, 1983) and Joanna Bourke's *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914* (Clarendon Press, 1993). Works like Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy's edited anthology *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Poolbeg, 1989) and Rosemary Cullen Owens' *A Social History of Women in Ireland: 1870-1970* (Gill & Macmillan, 2005) opt for a *longue durée* temporal framework, "remaking"<sup>50</sup> history by discussing the issues that would have fundamentally shaped women's experiences, ranging from prostitution to philanthropy through religious organizations, suffrage and the Irish Women's Franchise League<sup>51</sup> to trade unionism. Other texts focus more on women's contribution to Irish military and political history, such as *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags* (Irish Academic Press, 2004) edited by Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward, Sinead McCool's *No Ordinary Women - Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900-1923* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), Sonja Tiernan<sup>52</sup>'s *Eva Gore Booth: An Image of Such Politics* (Manchester University Press, 2012) and Jason

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<sup>50</sup> I borrow this term from Cullen Owens' statement that her book aims to "provide a step in 'remaking' the history of women in Ireland more accessible to students and general readers." See Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland: 1870-1970* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> A topic covered in greater detail in Cullen Owens' *Smashing Times: A History of the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement, 1889-1922* (Cork: Attic Press, 1984). Many suffragettes with nationalist politics found themselves in the difficult dilemma of whether to support "votes for women" first and the cause of nation second and vice-versa as John Redmond, among others, claimed that female suffrage would negatively affect the support of his party.

Knirek's *Women of the Dáil: Gender, Republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty* (Irish Academic Press, 2006) forwarded by Maria Luddy.

Some historians have examined how gender and violence interacted during this turbulent decade in Irish history.<sup>53</sup> Scholarship such as Ryan's "'Drunken Tans,'"<sup>54</sup> discusses how both Crown Forces and the IRA victimized women. Ryan positions herself in opposition to the findings in Sarah Benton's "Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913-1923," which emphasizes the infrequency of sexual outrages on women.<sup>55</sup> Ryan concluded her article by stating that sexual violence was more rampant during the War than previously thought. Debate continued in Marie Coleman's "Violence Against Women During the War of Independence, 1919-1921" and Clark's *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War*, which concur with Benton regarding the scarcity of instances of sexual assault and rape during the War of Independence. According to Coleman, for "rape to be a *weapon* of war it must have mass intimidatory effect and thus must be publicized."<sup>56</sup> Coleman finds little evidence of these in her quantitative archival research, and thus determines that rape cannot be considered as a "weapon of war" in this particular context.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ryan, Coleman, Benton and Clark have examined violence on women to varying degrees. While this issue was the focal point of both Ryan and Coleman's articles, Clark's *Everyday Violence's* focused subject matter is different, and Clark's discussion, while important for this thesis, is understandably less detailed.

<sup>54</sup> See Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004* (New York: New York University Press, 2012) for a similar methodological/disciplinary lens in a comparative framework.

<sup>55</sup> Sarah Benton, "Women Disarmed: The militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913-1923," *Feminist Review* 50.1 (July 1995): 148–172.

<sup>56</sup> Marie Coleman, "Violence Against Women During the War of Independence, 1919-1921," in *Years of Turbulence: The Irish revolution and its aftermath*, eds. Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (Dublin: UCD Press, 2015), 148.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Finally, there is a related body of literature indebted to the advances of feminist scholarship that seeks to nuance our understanding of the particular ways that masculinity is indelibly tied to Irish nationalism, exemplified by Beatty's *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938*, Jane McGaughey's *Ulster's Men: Protestant Unionist Masculinities and Militarization in the North of Ireland, 1912-1923* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), and Joseph Valente's *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Works like those highlighted in this literature review seek to examine how gender was forged and reformed in the context of war, and the ramifications of these experiences, rather than treating gender as a *fait accompli* – a static concept passively consumed and, at best, tested by a few radical members of the revolutionary generation. Towards this end, this thesis borrows from the methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by treating gender as a “form of valid knowledge” that can be interrogated by such questions as, “What is valid knowledge [about gender] at a certain point and a certain time?”, “How does this [gendered] knowledge arise and how is it passed on?”, “What functions does [gender] have for constituting subjects?” and “What consequences does [such gendered knowledge] have for the overall shaping and development of society?”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Siegfried Jäger and Florentine Maier, “Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis and Dispositive Analysis,” in *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), 34.

### iii. Performance Studies:

Performance studies scholarship helps illuminate how the knowledge of gender was passed on, constituted subjects and was consequential to the shaping and development of society. This discipline helps complement the historiography of the Irish Revolution in the context of this thesis in creating a conceptual framework through which gender can be more meaningfully contemplated. A few monographs and anthologies have applied performance studies insights specifically to the Irish cultural context, including *Crossroads – Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) edited by Fintan Walsh and Sara Brady; *That Was Us: Contemporary Irish Theatre and Performance* (Oberon Books, 2013) edited by Fintan Walsh; *Ireland, Memory and Performing the Historical Imagination* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) edited by Christopher Collins and Mary P. Caulfield; and Emilie Pine’s *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Palgrave, 2010). Moreover, some recent publications have focused more particularly on the relationship between performance and violence in Ireland, namely Lisa Fitzpatrick’s *Performing Violence in Contemporary Ireland* (Carysfort Press, 2010).

In the introduction to their *Performances of Violence*, editors Austin Sarat, Carleen Basler and Thomas L. Dumm assert, “in every act of violence more than physical force is involved [...] violent deeds are embedded in elaborate rituals and enactments.”<sup>59</sup> Violence is communicative, “self-creating and self-denying,” “grim and gruesome and yet theatrical and spectacular.”<sup>60</sup> Human violence, Sarat et al. argue,

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<sup>59</sup> Austin Sarat, Carleen Basler and Thomas L. Dumm eds., *Performances of Violence* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

possesses a deeply performative dimension, and can be understood not only as a product of circumstance, but also as an extension of our performed identities.

This theoretical vantage point intersects with the work of gender and performance studies scholar Judith Butler. The crux of Butler's theory of gender performativity is that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts."<sup>61</sup> Butler's theorizing of gender is deeply rooted in the "post structuralist understanding of the subject," in which the "substantive 'I' of the humanist subject becomes an illusion."<sup>62</sup> Crucially, the "[d]oer" is produced in and by the act."<sup>63</sup> It is "sustained social performances which create the reality of gender [...] which, significantly are not separable from agents, or actors, preceding the performances."<sup>64</sup> Gender, critically, is a "construction that regularly conceals its own genesis."<sup>65</sup> The belief that gender is a natural offshoot of biological sex can result in the punishment of those who "fail to do their gender right," also referred to as gender transgression.<sup>66</sup> This policing and punishing is evidence of the belief in the "naturalness" of gender.<sup>67</sup> "Doing" appropriate "gender involved 'sustained social performances' which involve the repetition of socially established meanings."<sup>68</sup> Of course, just as today, multiple femininities and masculinities existed in early twentieth

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<sup>61</sup> Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), 187.

<sup>62</sup> Gill Jagger, *Judith Butler: Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 18.

<sup>63</sup> Jagger, 22 & 26.

<sup>64</sup> Jagger, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Butler, 190.

<sup>66</sup> Butler, 190.

<sup>67</sup> Jagger, 28.

<sup>68</sup> Jagger, 26.

century Ireland, interacting “structurally with the systems of class [...] relations.”<sup>69</sup> Dominant, hegemonic or “normative” forms subordinated alternate forms that did not correspond with what was deemed to be socially appropriate objects of sexual desire, appearance and action.<sup>70</sup> Borrowing from Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony in the class system, theorist Raewyn Connell posited the notion of “hegemonic masculinity.” Applying this concept to the arena of warfare, scholars have identified certain traits, namely bravery, self-sacrifice and toughness, that constitute hegemonic masculinity in the theatre of military violence.<sup>71</sup>

In “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution – An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” Butler postulates that, “gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences.”<sup>72</sup> She notes that, “those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished.”<sup>73</sup> The notion that gender norms and ideals inform forms of violence, the rhetoric of those victimizing and the choices behind those victimized is central to this research project. I argue that Butler’s theories of gender performance and gender transgression can be pushed further, particularly in the context of revolutionary/political violence. Not only are those who fail to properly perform gender punished, but also the ways that this punishment and violence are unleashed reinforce the perceived gender of both perpetrator and victim. This argument builds on the co-constructions of gender that Butler’s theory allows, as well as on Elizabeth Wood’s

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<sup>69</sup> Conn Holohan and Tony Tracy eds., *Masculinity and Irish Popular Culture: Tiger’s Tales* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 16. This text borrows and builds on Raewyn Connell’s original positing of “hegemonic masculinity” in *Masculinities* (Polity Press, 1995).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Dafna N. Izraeli, “Gendering Military Service in the Israeli Defence Forces,” in *A Soldier and a Woman*, ed. Gerald J. De Groot and Corinna Peniston-Bird (New York: Routledge, 2000), 263.

<sup>72</sup> Butler, 157.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

definition of “gender violence,” particularly in how it differs from sexual violence: “Sexual violence differs from the broader category of gender violence in that the latter category includes violence that occurs because of the victim’s gender without the kinds of sexual contact included in sexual violence.”<sup>74</sup>

Gemma Clark states, “female republican sympathizers received humiliating, gendered punishments (such as haircutting,) but nothing to match the violent retribution and ‘sexually charged torture’ served on ‘politicized women’ by paramilitaries in Central Europe in the same period.”<sup>75</sup> Further explaining how this remained true in Ireland’s Civil War period, Clark concludes, “sexual assault has never been made a wartime tactic in Ireland.”<sup>76</sup> Marie Coleman states, “contemporary sources indicate that fear and threat of rape and sexual assault were more prevalent than actual assault, but the atmosphere and intimidation created by such a perception should not be mistaken for evidence of actual assaults.”<sup>77</sup> For the specific topic of sexual violence during the War of Independence, Coleman’s research presents the most current engagement with relevant statistics, and a consensus amongst the field’s leading thinkers.<sup>78</sup> Yet, Coleman concedes that this subject matter is “an area where the documentary evidence might not tell the whole story.”<sup>79</sup> While some scholarship is preoccupied with finding “possible reasons for the absence of sexual assault during the War of Independence,”<sup>80</sup> this thesis will concentrate on acts of violence that did take place and which are perhaps better

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<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth Jean Wood, “Variation in Sexual Violence during War,” *Politics & Society* 43.3 (Sept. 2006), 335.

<sup>75</sup> Clark, 192.

<sup>76</sup> Clark, 193.

<sup>77</sup> Coleman, “Violence Against Women,” 149.

<sup>78</sup> This positions Benton, Clark and Coleman in opposition to Ryan’s findings in “Drunken Tans.”

<sup>79</sup> Coleman, “Violence Against Women,” 156.

<sup>80</sup> Coleman, “Violence Against Women,” 150.

documented than is assumed, for what they say about how gender underpinned violence during the War. Neither the IRA nor Crown Forces were passive consumers of the gender norms that informed early twentieth century Irish society. Rather, Irish and British combatants actively contributed to the discursive fashioning of gender norms.

Violence cannot and should not be reduced to performance, nor are those involved in violent episodes necessarily conscious of their experiences as such. However, this does not preclude Performance Studies from offering a valuable perspective through which violence and constructions of identity can be approached. Richard Schechner advocated for this perspective in “Broad Spectrum Approach,” which challenges scholars “to move beyond the study of theatre and dance [and to] to make serious scholarly studies of performative behaviour, of how performance is at the core of politics, business, medicine, religion, popular entertainments, and ordinary face-to-face interactions.”<sup>81</sup>

#### **iv. Structure**

Using the tools supplied by Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity and gender transgression, this Master’s project seeks to contribute to scholarship on the Irish Revolution by studying the discursive fashioning of gender during the Irish Revolution. Chapter one accounts for the ways in which gender informed the worldview of the “revolutionary generation,” from motivating social and political activism as well as mediating participation in these initiatives, and culminates in emphasizing how the “knowledge of gender” informed the worldview of republicanism.

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<sup>81</sup> Richard Schechner, “Broadening the Broad Spectrum Approach,” *The Drama Review* 54,3 (Fall 2010), 7.

It also contemplates some of the experiences that informed the hegemonic brand of British martial masculinity that Crown Forces were meant to embody. With this foundation set, chapter two argues that this gendered “knowledge” informed Crown Force members’ worldview. As chapter three demonstrates, the IRA also committed acts of violence on women, and that these too are an extension of their own performance of masculinity. This section argues that violence on Irish women was not simply part of a political and military campaign, but also communicated contemporary expectations about gender.

This thesis is indebted to the scholarship that has uncovered and analyzed violent acts, particularly of a sexual nature, on women during the War of Independence. Building on the works cited above, this thesis seeks to further illuminate the narrative of women’s victimization – including but not limited to sexual violence – at the hands of both Crown Forces and the IRA by arguing that women’s bodies became sites where the destructive potential of hegemonic martial masculinity was performed.

## CHAPTER 1: IRISH REPUBLICANISM AND THE DISCOURSE OF GENDER

*“Ireland will engage in one simple understandable but most glorious Revival of Manhood and then will she build up a constitution.”<sup>82</sup>*

(Terence MacSwiney, 1920)

In Terence MacSwiney’s *Principles of Freedom*, the former Lord Mayor of Cork City who died on a hunger strike in 1920 describes the “qualities that are distinctive of the woman,” citing “a finer gentleness, sensibility, sympathy and tenderness.”<sup>83</sup> In this influential revolutionary publication MacSwiney goes on to state, “when we have these qualities intensified in any woman, and with them combined the endurance, courage and daring that are taken as the manly virtues, we have a woman of the heroic type.”<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, MacSwiney maintains that the

heroic example of our womanhood should be before not only our womanhood but our manhood. It should show us that patriotism does not destroy the finer feelings, but rather calls them forth and gives them wider play. We have been too used to thinking that the qualities of love and tenderness are no virtues for a soldier, that they will sap his resolution and destroy his work; but our movements fail always when they fail to be human.<sup>85</sup>

MacSwiney suggests that endurance, courage and daring – or, the best of ‘military masculinity’ – is something that is most effective when interacting with the best of a idealized femininity. Moreover, the soldier should be inspired by qualities typically deemed “unsoldierly” in order to excel in his military task. In this context, the value of military masculinity decreases when distanced from those “feminine” virtues. In this example, a single individual embodies *both* masculine and feminine ideals, and gender

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<sup>82</sup> UCD P48b/345, “The Facts and Principles of Irish Nationality,” April 7, 1920, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Terence MacSwiney, *Principles of Freedom* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1921), 120.

<sup>84</sup> MacSwiney, *Principles*, 120-121.

<sup>85</sup> MacSwiney, 128.

fluidly functions more as a currency in the rhetoric of war, much less as an absolute concept that guided thoughts and actions.

MacSwiney's ideas, much like his career, were exceptional.<sup>86</sup> The fluidity that MacSwiney espouses is not emblematic of the more commonly held sentiments and values of the republican movement. The latter were heavily conditioned by gendered norms, expectations and duties of Edwardian Irish society that shaped the revolutionary generation. One can get a sense of these norms in the artistic production of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century Gaelic Revival, which provided part of the "valid knowledge" surrounding gender leading up to the conflict. The Gaelic Revival movement saw influential members from mostly the upper middle-class, educated echelons stimulating revival of the Irish language, folkloric traditions and the concept of a national theatre by self-defining Ireland and Irishness as fundamentally separate from Britain and Britishness. This movement proposed the decolonization of Irish culture, as did the Gaelic Athletic Association, established in 1884 and made up of a more working class demographic. Through sport, "subordinated groups of men often used [pre-colonial and mythological warrior sports] to resist racist, colonial, and class domination."<sup>87</sup> Indeed, "these developments on the cultural and intellectual front during the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century, through the intervention of the

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<sup>86</sup> MacSwiney was the former Lord Mayor of Cork who died on hunger strike in 1920. He became somewhat of a martyr for the cause of Irish independence in republican lore, and is thus cannot be considered the "everyman" of the Volunteer organization. See Francis Costello's *Enduring the Most: The Life and Death of Terence MacSwiney* (Mount Eagle Publications, 1995).

<sup>87</sup> Brian Singleton, *Masculinities and The Contemporary Irish Theatre* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 11.

Irish Republican Brotherhood in both the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin, [would] eventually [provide] the basis for the creation of revolutionary Irish government.”<sup>88</sup>

In poetry and on the stage, gender – in addition to other concepts like nation – was negotiated by writers, performed by actors and consumed by audiences, just as they were by language students in classrooms and Gaelic athletes on pitches. The discursively fashioned forms of femininity and masculinity that are traceable in the literature of the Gaelic Revival informed the “enforced cultural performance” of gender that the Irish nation would require of its citizens.<sup>89</sup> A central image of which was Cathleen Ní Houlihan, a symbol of the Irish nation, a beautiful woman in need of protection, a maternal figure calling on physically strong young men to rally in her defense. Such mythic archetypes account for valid knowledge in the discursive creation of “woman” and “man” at this particular place and time.

The works of key figures of the Irish Literary Revival – William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory and John Millington Synge – were integral to the way gender was imagined. The ideal Irish woman is frequently the subject of Irish poetry from the period. Some of the most prolific artistic voices of the day meditated on femininity, particularly William Butler Yeats. Yeats’ “No Second Troy” (1916) proposes an “image of female subordination and the subsequent ostracism of women from the politically correct nation-building enterprise.”<sup>90</sup> The piece is dedicated to Yeats’ unrequited love interest Maud Gonne. Politically engaged and creatively minded, Gonne founded *Inghinidhe na hÉireann*, a nationalist women’s organization that encouraged education,

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<sup>88</sup> Costello, *The Irish Revolution and its Aftermath 1916-1923*, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Jagger, 20.

<sup>90</sup> Tsung-Chi Chang, “W.B. Yeats, Cultural Nationalism and Disempowered Women,” *Tamkang Review* 43.1 (Dec. 2012), 54.

political activism, and cultural production. The small but influential organization produced political pamphlets, financed Irish plays, and held Irish language lessons for all ages amongst other contributions to the fabric of Irish cultural life.<sup>91</sup> Against Yeats' view that female activism was "far from something laudable," "these women were stepping outside the norms of a time when [...] political activity was seen as irreconcilable with the feminine aspects of their personalities and with their role as mothers, wives and sweethearts."<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the "idea of female docility is depicted" again in Yeats' "A Prayer for My Daughter,"<sup>93</sup> where "custom, culture, and tenderness are highlighted," but "personal opinion, intellectual cultivation and political participation are thoroughly left far behind [in] the poet speaker's concern when referring to his ideal womanhood."

While men penned many of the works that perpetuated an idealized view of domestic femininity, female voices also contributed to this imagery. For instance, the play *Cathleen Ní Houlihan*, though often misattributed to William Butler Yeats, was largely Lady Gregory's reworking of the Irish legend of the same name. An example of the *aisling* poetry tradition (in which Ireland is personified by a woman and is redeemed by a nationalist saviour, typically a Stuart claimant to the British throne) the play stages an elderly Cathleen's transformation into a beautiful, young woman once a young and able male protagonist agrees to retrieve her four stolen fields, representing Ireland's four

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<sup>91</sup> Sinead McCoole, *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years, 1900-23* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 23.

<sup>92</sup> Tsung-Chi, "W.B. Yeats," 54; McCoole, *No Ordinary Women*, 23.

<sup>93</sup> Tsung-Chi, 55.

provinces.<sup>94</sup> A possible reading of this ending is that Irish men require the beauty and support of young women, in addition to the strength, chastity, sacrifice and resolve of its able male youth. Indeed, the Bureau of Military History Witness Statement of Robert Brennan recollects how the play was interpreted in such a way. According to Brennan, the play “brought into the forefront of the hearts the simple grandeur of sacrifice.”<sup>95</sup> Brennan reminisces on actress Maud Gonne’s beauty and claims “without hesitation” that it mobilized him to take arms against England.<sup>96</sup>

This is not the only reading of how *Cathleen* stages the relationship between woman and nation,<sup>97</sup> nor the only artistic contemplation of womanhood. Gregory presents alternative versions of femininity in plays like *Grania*. “*Grania* is a reworking of a well known middle-Irish tale about a young woman, betrothed to the ageing hero Finn, who falls in love with Diarmuid, his right hand man, and persuades him to run away with her.”<sup>98</sup> In Gregory’s rendition of the story, Grania’s “intelligence rather than her beauty” is emphasized, as Finn ponders her quick wit over her physical appearance.<sup>99</sup> Gormleith in Gregory’s *Kincora* personifies the playwright’s “objection to the prevailing masculine attitude towards women as domestic angels, symbols of fertility and

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<sup>94</sup> P. J Matthews, “Century Ireland 1913-1923 – Literature and 1916,” <http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/literature-and-1916> (Accessed March 2 2017).

<sup>95</sup> BMH WS: #779, Robert Brennan, 19-20.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> See “Cathleen ni Houlihan Writes Back – Maud Gonne and Irish Nationalist Theatre” by Antoinette Quinn in *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland* edited by Anthony Brady and Maryann Gianlanella for a discussion of how through her interpretation of *Cathleen*, Gonne infused the role with sexual potential, complicating the image of “female Ireland” as the domestic and the subdued. Delia Cahill, Michael’s initial love interest, also nuances a reductive view of Irish women’s sexual agency. After all, Delia and Michael were to be wed and thus presumably consummate their marriage.

<sup>98</sup> Maureen Waters, “Lady Gregory’s “Grania”: A Feminist Voice,” *Irish University Review* 25.1 (Spring-Summer 1995), 15, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25511471>

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

tranquility.”<sup>100</sup> Moreover, Synge’s portrayal of women in *The Playboy of the Western World* offers stark opposition to Gregory’s Cathleen. The character Sarah Tansey rips off her petticoat or “shift,” appearing on stage in a state of undress to conceal Christy Mahon from the pursuing mob.<sup>101</sup>

After the play ended, Gregory telegraphed Yeats, informing him that the “audience broke up in disorder at the word shift,” suggesting that more progressive stagings of gender were perhaps not absorbed by all theatre attendees.<sup>102</sup> There is further evidence of the reductive, idealized imagery of Irish women filtering into and influencing republican ideology.<sup>103</sup> A rare work of contemporary historical fiction published in 1921 by Talbot Press about an IRA Volunteer and his family’s experience during the tempestuous years of the War of Independence, *The Trail of the Black and Tans*, contains several examples of this idealization of the female Irish body, and the gendered values assigned to women. Describing the protagonist and future Volunteer’s sisters, *The Trail’s* author explains that the girls “bear record of great Irish ladies who embroidered and did fine weaving in ancient days. The roughest farm work has not destroyed the delicacy of their little fingers.”<sup>104</sup> Whereas “rough work” is not readily associated with idealized femininity, it is noteworthy that the specification of this work taking place on a farm securely places it within the realm of domesticity.

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<sup>100</sup> Noelle Bowles, “Nationalism and Feminism in Lady Gregory’s “Kincora,” “Dervorgilla,” and “grania,” *New Hibernia Review/ Iris Éireannach Nua* 3.3 (Autumn 1999), 119, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20557586>

<sup>101</sup> Christopher Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre 1601-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 132.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Matthews, “Century Ireland 1913-1923 – Literature and 1916.”

<sup>104</sup> [Emily Ussher], “The Hurler on the Ditch”, *The Trail of the Black & Tans* (Dublin: The Talbot Press Ltd., 1921), 7.

This is not to say that women were excluded from the major political and social debates that defined this period of revolutionary change, that the domestic cannot be political, or that embodying socially acceptable forms of femininity necessarily denies agency. To be sure, folklore and the arts were not the only sources of “valid” knowledge about gender in revolutionary Ireland. Moreover, the poems and plays in this analysis do not present the entire scope of how gender was being contemplated, even through the arts, in Edwardian Ireland.<sup>105</sup> Women were actively engaged in carving out their own spaces through family life, civic participation, political activism and cultural production. In describing the life of Mary Butler (a woman elected to the Gaelic League Executive and frequent periodical contributor) and her peers, Frank Biletz notes, “besides bringing up their children to speak the national language, Irish women could also teach them pride in the national history, immerse them in Irish culture, and purchase household articles of Irish manufacture.”<sup>106</sup> In the introduction to *Women and the Irish Nation*, D.A.J. MacPherson reminds readers “in both their associational activism [through the Gaelic League, Sinn Féin and the United Irishwomen] and in their own [newspaper and periodical] writings, women became engaged in public debate about Irish identity.”<sup>107</sup> Particularly, women were lobbying for female suffrage, and were challenging the IPP’s hostility to women’s political participation, thus wrestling with the difficult predicament of whether to prioritize nation or suffrage.<sup>108</sup> And yet, participation

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<sup>105</sup> The selection of cultural products included in this thesis, like plays and poems, represents a methodological sequence whereby source material expressing attitudes towards gender were located in archival documents, expressions like Robert Brennan’s relating to the role played by artistic stagings of gender in the republican outlook were uncovered, and the content of these pieces was then analyzed.

<sup>106</sup> Frank Biletz, “Women and Irish Ireland: The Domestic Nationalism of Mary Butler,” *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Spring, 2002). 61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20646366>

<sup>107</sup> D.A.J. MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

<sup>108</sup> See McCoole *No Ordinary Women*, 26.

in these debates was inevitably “highly gendered, being determined by late-Victorian and Edwardian ideas about acceptable ‘womanly’ behaviour.”<sup>109</sup> By and large, women who were politically minded, militarily-active, and/or business-oriented did not find a hospitable home in the male dominated republican movement that tended to take for granted “prevailing gender discourse.”<sup>110</sup>

While arguing that the voices of women were crucial in advancing the nationalist project, this thesis is simultaneously limited in its representation of these same voices. This is intrinsically related to this thesis' particular subject matter, concerned with the reductive view of femininity espoused by the IRA organization and this view's consequences. This focus inevitably requires the consulting of mostly male-voice source material. As Diarmaid Ferriter notes, while a feminized Irish nation bore heavily on the consciousness of young anti-colonial, military-minded Irish men, Irish women did not: “Any search for sex in the memoirs and biographies written by Irish republicans of this era will be in vain [...] What the reader gets, instead, is a depiction of chivalrous masculinity, brotherhood and camaraderie” that “knew nothing about women beyond their home-making functions and their ability to provide some of the services required to support the IRA's military operations.”<sup>111</sup> Some women's “support” extended beyond the domestic sphere. Cumann na mBan, the republican women's association affiliated to the IRA during the War of Independence, “gave to the national cause in the most trying

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<sup>109</sup> MacPherson, *Women and the Irish Nation*, 2.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2009), 95-96.

of circumstances” and “were indispensable to the Army.”<sup>112</sup> According to Tom Barry, Commanding Officer of the West Cork Brigade of the IRA:

The activities of Cumann na mBan embraced the collection of intelligence data among enemy sympathizers, often inside the very ranks of the crown forces; [the operation of republican courts]; the carrying of dispatches; the nursing in secret of wounded republican soldiers; the collection of funds to help the prosecution of the national effort; the provision of food, clothing, tobacco and other necessities for the men on the run, and generally the organizing of support and encouragement throughout the countryside and the towns for all engaged in physical resistance against the crown.<sup>113</sup>

This seeming “breach” of appropriate femininity is explained by Ryan in her study “‘In the Line of Fire’: Representations of Women and War (1919-1923) Through the Writings of Republican Men,” when she suggests, “representations of Irish femininity were frequently circumscribed within these masculine discourses.”<sup>114</sup> In other words, while Cumann na mBan embodied the anomaly of the female soldier, this “othered” identity was reabsorbed by the masculine Irish republican machine through the relegation of women’s military work to fundamentally supportive and thus subordinate roles. Moreover, Cumann na mBan’s participation has been desexualized, thus poses no “threat” in working with the chaste IRA. This branding of Cumann na mBan echoes an *Our Boys*<sup>115</sup> article titled “An Irish Joan of Arc,” about 1798 heroine Betsy Grey.<sup>116</sup> Grey is described as “as brave, as true to her country’s cause unselfish, as devoted ... as

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<sup>112</sup> Brian Ó Conchubhair ed., *Rebel Cork’s Fighting Story 1916-1921, Told By The Men Who Made It*, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2009), 274; Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland*, 208-209.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Louise Ryan, “‘In the Line of Fire’: Representations of Women and War (1919-1923) Through the Writings of Republican Men,” in *Irish Women and Nationalism – Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags*, eds. Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (Dublin & Portland: IAP, 2004), 54.

<sup>115</sup> The organ of the Irish Christian Brothers.

<sup>116</sup> This interesting historical figure, “‘the heroine of Ballinahich,’ [...] led a troupe of rebels during the United Irishmen insurrection at Ballinahich.” See Mary Trotter, *Ireland’s National Theatres – Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 170.

the inspired maid who saved France.”<sup>117</sup> Grey’s maidenhood is crucial, as it ushers her participation in the “country’s cause” back towards the realm of what is appropriate for a woman.

Similar to the place occupied by Grey in imagining ideal femininity, there was no shortage of mythological, folkloric or literary figures that served as points of reference for the imagining the “ideal” Irish man of the Gaelic Revival, as suggested by Michael, the young man moved to action in *Cathleen Ní Houlihan*. Again, the poems read and plays attended, the language learned, and the sports played informed the outlook of nationalist and republican-minded individuals. Volunteer Florence O’Donoghue’s oration at compatriot Liam Hoare’s funeral is evidence of this. O’Donoghue stressed how “Hoare was typical of the men of the IRA at a time when the Army had attracted to its ranks all that was brave and virile, all that was chivalrous, unselfish and high-spirited,” presenting “the best of the young manhood of the nation.”<sup>118</sup> In *Man of the People – The Intimate Story of the Hero of Ballinalee*, John Mageean outlines the “personal qualities and characteristics [that] must the hero have if he is to be accepted as a hero.”<sup>119</sup>

First of all he must be physically great, big-bodied, burly, the full of a door. His personal courage must be outstanding and unquestionable. He must be rosy, generous and chivalrous. He must have some noble, endearing fault which is easily forgiven, extravagance for choice. But outside battle, he must be gentle and courteous and capable for comradery.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> NLI IR 05 01.

<sup>118</sup> NLI MS 31, 444 (4), “Liam Hoare Memorial.”

<sup>119</sup> UCD P151/1911, John Mageean, *Man of the People – The Intimate Story of the Hero of Ballinalee*, p.12.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

Drawing again from *The Trail of the Black and Tans*, the Volunteer was something to be “manufactured,” or fashioned.<sup>121</sup> Espousing and performing the particular brand of masculinity suggested by Mageean was central to this manufacturing. What did this masculinity look like? Ryan highlights an emphasis on “sobriety, youth, courage and chivalry towards women [as] the characteristics self-ascribed to Irish republican masculinity.”<sup>122</sup> In *What Sinn Féin Stands For*, journalist and Sinn Féin member Aodh de Blacam called on the Volunteer reader to “make examples of your own life, your virtues, your courage, your temperance, your manliness.”<sup>123</sup> Republican sources confirm the internalization of these, and other, idealized traits in republican masculinity. IRA GHQ General Order 30 from November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1921 clearly states that the punishments for frequenting public houses are a warning in the first case, a reduction in ranks in the second, and outright dismissal from the army for the third.<sup>124</sup> Alcohol’s influence in rousing vice needed to be utterly curtailed.

Na Fianna Éireann, the Irish republican youth wing, “opened to eight- to eighteen year-olds and founded by Bulmer Hobson and Countess Markievicz in 1909,” issued a handbook to members that outlined the group’s history, culture and expectations.<sup>125</sup> It called on “all the chivalry of the Irish heart, all the training and manhood of the Irish body, all the service, devotion and self-sacrifice of [Ireland’s] boys and young men.”<sup>126</sup> This chivalric outlook meant that “the service of Ireland will be [the] first object in life and that [one need] strive with all [his] mind and strength and

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<sup>121</sup> See title for Chapter III: “The Manufacture of a Volunteer.” [Emily Ussher], “The Hurler on the Ditch”, *The Trail of the Black & Tans* (Dublin: The Talbot Press Ltd., 1921), 25.

<sup>122</sup> Ryan, “In the Line of Fire,” 54.

<sup>123</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2005), 195.

<sup>124</sup> NLI MS 739.

<sup>125</sup> Ferriter, *A Nation and not a Rabble*, 115.

<sup>126</sup> NLI IR f 16, *Fianna Handbook*, 86.

energy to carry out the promise [he] made when [he] became a member.”<sup>127</sup> Heavy emphasis was placed on seizing opportunity to showcase commitment to the cause of Irish freedom. It is worth noting that this publication and others like *Our Boys*, though directed at and read by young boys, enjoyed the readership of some girls, as evidenced by submission to puzzle contests.<sup>128</sup>

Similar emphasis is placed on personal initiative in literature intended for more mature republicans, many of which graduated into the ranks of the Volunteers from the Fianna. A December 1919 issue of the official Dáil Éireann publication *The Irish Bulletin* describes the “Character of Sinn Fein” as built on “honesty, [...] intellectualism, [...] and] discipline.”<sup>129</sup> An official “Training Order” implored that

the development of Morale must be kept ever in view, and every opportunity to improve it availed of. We must have a better discipline. The military atmosphere should permeate every Volunteer function and everything appertaining to the Volunteer. Punctuality, smartness, exactness, thoroughness, are its essence: and it must emanate from and be sustained by the officers and subcommanders.<sup>130</sup>

A July 1920 issue of the IRA gazette *An tÓglách*, reminded readers that “intemperance, laziness, [and] negligence should be shunned and discouraged in every way.”<sup>131</sup> The “Volunteer spirit,” informed by the “respectability” of anti-colonialism, Catholicism and lower middle class aspirations, required a suppression of “drunkenness, slackness [and] indiscipline.”<sup>132</sup> Crucially, the latter defines republican masculinity not only in relation to Irish femininity, but also in opposition to the vices attributed to

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<sup>127</sup> NLI IR 367 f 1, *Fianna Handbook*, 14.

<sup>128</sup> NLI IR 05 01, *Our Boys*, December 1917, 110.

<sup>129</sup> NLI IR 94109 I 15.

<sup>130</sup> NLI MSS 901/68, “Training Order 5/10/18,” 2.

<sup>131</sup> *An tÓglách* (Vol. 2, no. 14), July 15 1920, 2.

<sup>132</sup> See Gavin Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society – Politics, Class, and Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 60; *An tÓglách* (Vol. 2, no. 13), June 15 1920, 2.

Crown Forces. “The Volunteers,” for their part, fashioned themselves as “the armed and disciplined young manhood of Ireland,” that stood in defiance of cowardly bullies without “discipline, [... and] generally in a state of drunkenness.”<sup>133</sup> The Volunteers’ was an anti-colonial, “masculine construction of citizenship ... opposed to effeminacy marked by weakness, impotency and cowardice.”<sup>134</sup> Irish republican masculinity was the bulwark against a degraded form of masculinity that threatened the morale of the nation.

Conversely, from the imperial English vantage point, manliness “was ardently believed to be peculiar to *Englishness*, a joint benison of an Anglo-Saxon and an Anglican-Protestant heritage.”<sup>135</sup> As Joseph Valente observes, “values that English spokesmen ascribed to their Teutonic origins (pluck, realism, stoic calm) and to their Protestant traditions (individuality, independence, rationality) were regularly taken to underpin or derive from the signature manliness of the race.”<sup>136</sup> According to Michael Roper, by the Edwardian period the ‘muscular Christianity’ of the mid-nineteenth century, which had emphasized qualities such as compassion, fairness, and altruism, had given way to secular and more aggressive ideals” including “the forbearance of pain and the suppression of sentiment.”<sup>137</sup> Indeed, “kindliness [was] sacrificed for toughness, and imagination for firmness.”<sup>138</sup> These ideals did not present safeguards against the horrors of World War I’s trench warfare including death, injury, mutilation, capture or

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<sup>133</sup> *An tÓglách* (Vol. 2, no. 13), June 15 1920, 1; *An tÓglách* (Vol. 2, no. 20), October 1 1920, 2.

<sup>134</sup> Miller, “Pain, Trauma, and Memory in the Irish War of Independence,” 122.

<sup>135</sup> Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish Nationalist Culture, 1880-1922* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Michael Roper, “Between Manliness: The ‘War Generation’ and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950,” *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (April 2005), 347.

<sup>138</sup> Roper, “Between Manliness,” 347.

post-traumatic stress or other psycho-emotional wounds. It can be argued that these pillars of Edwardian masculinity were reinforced by the experience of the Great War, which reaffirmed the virtues of toughness, firmness and the endurance of pain in the national imagining of martial masculinity.

In *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Jessica Meyer explains that the “First World War was constructed by British social and cultural discourses as both gendered and gendering through the role it would play in ‘making men.’”<sup>139</sup> Allegedly, the Great War would reverse the shame caused by British defeat during the Boer War, and “cure” the “moral degeneracy of the middle classes, evident in the continuing influence of Decadence as an artistic aesthetic,” upholding the toughness and firmness Roper identifies.<sup>140</sup> Men would thus serve according to the requirements of their gender on the front, fulfilling the more “important” military duties, whereas women would assume their proper function in a supportive, and indeed subordinate, capacity at home.<sup>141</sup>

In her pivotal article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” Joan Wallach Scott posits a two-part definition of gender, which can be applied to understanding British martial masculinity.<sup>142</sup> Scott states, “the core of the definition rests on an integral connection between two propositions: gender is a constitutive

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<sup>139</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), 3.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> *Men of War* also details how the lived reality of the war – defined by fear, sadness, desperation and anger, as well as the external expression of these emotions – was crucially different than societal expectations. See p. 132, for example.

<sup>142</sup> The use of generalized terms like “British martial masculinity” may seem generalizing, and perhaps insensitive as to how this definition might vary according to class. However, according to Roper, “by the early twentieth century, the culture of imperial manliness had spread to other sections of the middle- and lower-middle classes, becoming institutionalized through militaristic organizations such as the boy Scouts and the Boys’ Brigades.” (347)

element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”<sup>143</sup> Scott goes on:

The legitimizing of war – of expending young lives to protect the state – has variously taken the forms of explicit appeals to manhood, the need to defend otherwise vulnerable women and children, of implicit reliance on the belief in the duty of sons to serve their leaders of their (father the) king, and of associations between masculinity and national strength.<sup>144</sup>

Meyer and Scott thus suggest a British martial masculinity that differs from the Irish martial masculinity outlined above. Nationalist Ireland collectively resisted conscription in 1918, though tens of thousands of Irish men fought and died in the British Army. The lived legacy of the First World War in nationalist Ireland is very different from that of Britain and Unionist Ulster, in terms of scope and numbers. To have participated in the War was cause for suspicion amongst the ranks of the Volunteer organization, even considered a betrayal of Ireland, though many Volunteers had served. In this way, Irish ex-servicemen not only represented political and military opposition, but also embodied degraded versions of their own masculinity.

Consequently, as hinted at by Terence MacSwiney, a revival of “manhood” was required to oppose British colonialism. This revival was an integral part of the nationalist project, as gender would mediate participation in civic, familial and community life in independent Ireland. Per Butler, “the enactment of gender is [...] socially approved and politically regulated rather than dictated by some kind of internal nature.”<sup>145</sup> As this chapter has demonstrated, those who participated in and experienced

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<sup>143</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91.5 (Dec. 1986): 1067.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Jagger, 27.

the events of the War of Independence constituted what it meant to be a man or a woman in early twentieth century Ireland. In writing, in theatre productions, as well as through political and social activism, views were voiced about Irish femininity and Irish manhood. Those who went on to join republican organizations consumed and acted on the knowledge of particular versions of feminine and masculine gender. British martial masculinity was also informed by the knowledge of gender discursively created through civic life and on the battlefield. As the following chapter demonstrates, acts of violence committed by Crown Forces effectively performed these gender norms and imaginings of statehood. While not part of an official military strategy, these acts were absorbed into a broader 'war effort,' where gender violence also became a way to advance political and military goals.

## CHAPTER II: GENDER PERFORMED – CROWN FORCES VIOLENCE ON WOMEN

“*The Auxies were supposed to be officers and gentleman...*”<sup>146</sup>  
(Geraldine Dillon, 1950)

In the introduction to *Age of Atrocity – Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland*, editors Clodagh Tait, David Edwards and Pádraig Lenihan remind readers that

In the past as today, an attack causing minor injuries could as equally be defined as extreme and unforgiveable as one that caused a massive loss of life. This was even more the case when those who bore the brunt of the attack were seen to be innocent of any provocation, or to be especially vulnerable in some way (civilians, women and children, the elderly, and other non-combatants, including clerics).<sup>147</sup>

Several hundred years later, in the early twentieth century, “pain was a defining feature of the War of Independence and offers an important lens through which experiential aspect of the conflict can be considered.”<sup>148</sup> While “the War of Independence led to the death of an estimated 1,200 people,” which is miniscule in comparison to the contemporary World War I statistics, “the manner in which it was conducted [nonetheless] gave it an impact far beyond what the fatalities would suggest, and there are no reliable figures for civilian deaths.”<sup>149</sup>

Reliable figures are lacking, too, for the 1919-1921 Anglo-Irish conflict’s female victims. In his BMH Statement, Volunteer George F.H. Berkeley observes, “it would be very difficult to prove” cases of sexual assault on Irish women.<sup>150</sup> “Firstly because the Irishwoman would rather die than appear in court. Secondly because, although assaults

<sup>146</sup> BMH WS: #424, Geraldine Dillon, 1.

<sup>147</sup> Clodagh Tait, David Edwards and Pádraig Lenihan eds., *Age of Atrocity – Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 20.

<sup>148</sup> Miller, “Pain, Trauma, and Memory in the Irish War of Independence,” 118.

<sup>149</sup> Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*, 220.

<sup>150</sup> BMH WS#: 994, George F.H. Berkeley, 100.

on women undoubtedly existed, they were few in number.”<sup>151</sup> Berkeley’s claim is problematic in its generalizing of “the Irishwoman,” but does point to the reality that “proof” of assault remains difficult to find. Many women were reluctant to share their traumatic experiences, and given the historian’s dependence on archives, academic work that deals with this type of violence can often only cautiously conjecture. While total numbers are probably quite low, individual cases are illuminating and stand out in the context of the overall low number of civilian and combatant casualties. Marie Coleman highlights one instance that is “probably the clearest case of sexual assault, so serious that its consequence was fatal.”<sup>152</sup> The victim’s name was Kate Maher. On December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1920 in Dundrum, Tipperary, Maher “died as a result of a ‘fracture of the base of the skull accelerated by haemorrhage from [a] wound in the vagina.”<sup>153</sup>

Another instance of sexual assault can be found in the papers of Desmond Fitzgerald, an Irish Volunteer and former MP. As Director of Publicity for Dáil Éireann from 1919-1921 during the War of Independence, Fitzgerald oversaw the collection of depositions from “witnesses to and victims of acts of violence on the part of Crown Forces in Cork.”<sup>154</sup> This inquiry, admittedly as much propagandistic as informative, shed light on the impact of revolutionary violence on non-combatants, and more particularly on the ways in which the violence of the War of Independence affected civilian women. Among the testimonies collected is that of Helena Murray of Courtbrack, Blarney, County Cork, recalling events that took place on December 12,

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Coleman, “Violence Against Women,” 145.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> “Papers of Desmond and Mabel Fitzgerald (P80) Descriptive Catalogue,” 1993, UCD, Dublin, Ireland, 20.

1920. Murray recalls, “[a member of the British Crown Forces] drew out his bayonet and told me to look at it and feel it and said he’d drive it ten inches of it inch by inch in my breast, and other parts of my body, that I couldn’t well mention.”<sup>155</sup> Within the Fitzgerald papers – and in other archival collections, including the Military Archives’ BMH Witness Statements and the Military Service Pensions Collections<sup>156</sup> – there is evidence of similar cases. What renders Murray’s experience especially salient to this thesis is how her testimony hints at many of the dynamics of violence at play during this turbulent period. The sexualisation of violence is suggested by the Crown Force member demanding that Murray look at and feel his phallic-like bayonet, while dreading the implied threat of its’ forced vaginal insertion.<sup>157</sup> The ways gender mediates violent acts is gestured at by Murray’s “modest” reluctance to openly discuss her genitals, a circumspection which is very much in line with Edwardian requirements of feminine propriety.<sup>158</sup>

While documentary evidence remains limited, there is much more to uncover about this disturbing reality, by using the statistics that have been generated, the testimonies collected and the police reports revisited. This chapter begins by discussing the forms of violence, like haircutting and assault, experienced by women at the hands

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<sup>155</sup> UCD P80/58 (16).

<sup>156</sup> A digitized collection of applications to the Irish Free States seeking compensation for “wounded members, and the widows, children and dependents of deceased members, of Óglaigh na hÉireann including the National Army, the Irish Volunteers, and the Irish Citizen Army through the payment of allowances and gratuities. Over time, provision was enhanced and broadened to include members of the Hibernian Rifles, Cumann na mBan, Fianna Éireann and certain members of the Connaught Rangers.” See “Origin and Scope,” *Military Archives and the National Archives*, 2017, <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection/about-the-collection/origin-and-scope>.

<sup>157</sup> This is implied by Murray’s testimony, although not explicitly stated.

<sup>158</sup> And, the mid-century requirements’ of De Valera’s conservative Ireland, as these testimonies were collected in the 1940s and 1950s.

of Crown Forces during the War of Independence. It then situates these as examples of gender performance in light of what they reveal about the attitudes and perceptions of both perpetrators and victims.

In spite of an Official RIC Memorandum that “women must invariably be respected [... and just] because the cowardly blackguards of the IRA cut women’s hair, it is no reason why the RIC should retaliate by similar action,” numerous reports indicate that this order was disregarded.<sup>159</sup> For instance, Berkeley recalled men who were “undoubtedly drunk” assaulting a woman in her

[d]ressing-gown with her two pigtails down her back, and an Auxiliary had dragged her out of the front door by the hair and had cut off one of the pigtails. When she put up her hand to try and save it, he had deliberately cut downwards with some sharp instrument and severed a vein between her fingers.<sup>160</sup>

Several other cases of forcible haircutting, are notable in primary source material, a “tactic” historically used on adulteresses and perhaps most infamously documented in France during the aftermath of World War II. After France’s liberation, women who fraternized with the German enemy – also sardonically described as “horizontal collaborators” – were seen as having “cuckolded” the nation and French masculinity.<sup>161</sup> A scene witnessed by Lieutenant Richard Holborow of the Royal Engineers in a small town outside Dieppe hauntingly paints a hair shearing scene whereby a “cut-throat razor” was drawn from a man’s pocket, and with “a few deft strokes,” the screaming girl was “completely bald, and then [...] lifted up and displayed

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<sup>159</sup> IWM UK, J P Swindlehurst Private Papers, 10415, Misc. 175 Item 2658, “Discipline – 11 Nov 1920 Memorandum to R.I.C.,” Written by H.H. Tudor, Major General Police Adviser, 320.

<sup>160</sup> BMH WS#: 994, George F.H. Berkeley, 95.

<sup>161</sup> Keith Lowe, *Savage Continent: Europe in the Aftermath of World War II* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2012), 168.

to [a ...] howling and jeering mob.”<sup>162</sup> This punishment was often carried out in public spaces, and there was often a “sexual nature” to these ritual punishments, as “women were frequently stripped naked during their head-shaving ceremonies [...] had their bare bottoms spanked, and their breasts daubed with swastikas.”<sup>163</sup> This act allegedly brought “communities together – as a relatively safe and non-permanent form of violence, it was the single act of vengeance in which everyone could be involved,” and in “at least one area of France, the local people presented those who carried out the ceremony with knives and razors as a ‘souvenir’ of their day’s work.”<sup>164</sup>

In the Irish context, there are intriguing historical connections between hair and nationalist culture, stretching back to the *gleb* – a long fringe used to obscure the faces of Irish warriors – in the early modern period, to the cropped hair of the “croppy boys,” as the rebels of the 1798 United Irish movement led by Theobald Wolfe Tone were known.<sup>165</sup> During the War of Independence, a republican having his hair shorn in prison could serve as a badge of honour. Seán Kennedy recalled, “we all, of course, underwent the ordeal of having our hair cut to the scalp by the prison barber.”<sup>166</sup> Kennedy stated, “later on the prison hair cut was looked upon as the martyr’s badge and the prison barber’s time was kept fully occupied cropping the heads of the various prisoners.”<sup>167</sup> In addition to the cachet that accompanied this cropping, “short hair cuts were in a sense a

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<sup>162</sup> Lowe, 169.

<sup>163</sup> Lowe, 171.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger eds., *Nationalism and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 165; Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, 84.

<sup>166</sup> BMW WS#: 885, Seán Kennedy, 6.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

relief as it obviated the necessity for the use of a comb or hair brush,” particularly given the scarcity of these implements on the run.<sup>168</sup>

In terms of female victimization, these above-mentioned testimonies are far from the only instances of hairshearing and physical violence on during the War of Independence. Volunteer Patrick Lyons remembers events that took place in Lixnaw village, North Kerry, in which enemy forces “beat up a number of civilians and Volunteers, seized a young girl and cut her hair, and burned down the local creamery. They returned a few days later and burned down the local parish hall.”<sup>169</sup> In speaking of her sister Agnes, Kathleen Daly of Limerick recalls how the Black and Tans “grabbed her, threw her on the ground, and dragged her ... on her face, by the hair.”<sup>170</sup> One of them then stooped over her and “cut off her hair with a razor.”<sup>171</sup> *The Cork Examiner* further reported that the man shearing her hair “deliberately cut her hand inflicting a deep wound which needed several stiches.”<sup>172</sup>

While a common form of gender and often-sexualized violence on women, haircutting was far from the only form of violence Irish women experienced at the hands of the RIC and the British Army. In her sworn testimony, Bridget O’Brien remembers a raid on her home, and witnessing her “daughter struggling with a man who had a revolver in his hand.”<sup>173</sup> Statements collected by the RIC are but one of the resources that uncover these crimes. A RIC police report from Mayo dated October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920 states “4 men of the A + S Highlanders killed a cow and wounded a woman at Balla [...

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> BMH WS#: 1166, Patrick Lyons, 9.

<sup>170</sup> D.M. Leeson, *The Black and Tans: British Police in the Irish War of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ryan, “Drunken Tans,” 80.

<sup>173</sup> NLI MS, 556(2), “Sworn Testimony of Bridget O’Brien.”

and that] they were drunk.”<sup>174</sup> Another report recalls the assault of a presumed republican’s “daughter Elizabeth, age 24, and his wife age 68.”<sup>175</sup> An additional testimony of an eighteen year-old girl whose brother was on the run claims that she was “dragged violently into the day room. There she was pushed, prodded and baited round the room by a number of police.”<sup>176</sup>

Even when not explicitly sexual, gender consistently underpinned Crown Force violence against women, while gender itself was constituted through violent acts. The perceived femininity of domestic space guided Crown Force actions that deeply impacted women as mothers, sisters, wives, homemakers and homeowners. Items stolen during raids, such a jewellery and bread knives, represented the loss of precious keepsakes and heirlooms, in addition to household goods required for the running of a home, the latter an ongoing responsibility that fell under the purview of women, both in times of peace and of war.<sup>177</sup> There are other examples of domestic spaces being destroyed as a way to break the resolve, humiliate and punish Irish women perceived as IRA supporters. The BMH Statement of Geraldine Dillon, sister of the executed Easter 1916 leader Joseph Mary Plunkett, recalls, “parlours used as lavatories” by Crown Forces.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, “reports on raids and burnings used sexualized language to emphasize female vulnerability and suggest the deliberate desecration of the private space.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> NA UK, WO 35/89, CR #2/30917.

<sup>175</sup> NLI MS, 556(7).

<sup>176</sup> NLI MS, 556(8), “Women and Children Under the Terror,” April 17, 1920, 8-9.

<sup>177</sup> NLI MS, 556 (7).

<sup>178</sup> BMH WS#: 424, Geraldine Dillon, 11.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

The psychological abuse of Irish women was also underpinned by constructions of gender. Specifically, women were aware that Crown Forces capitalized on the more ‘fragile’ female disposition as a means of waging war. In her BMH Statement, Linda Kearns, a Sinn Féin and Cumann na mBan affiliate, recalls an episode in which she was stopped in her car while transporting a few Volunteers in possession of arms and ammunition. She states, “[t]he Auxiliaries adopted a devilish plan, probably to wear down my nerves.”<sup>180</sup> The plan was that one captured Volunteer at a time was taken from the barracks, and a shot was subsequently heard in the distance. Kearns insisted that the guns and ammunition were hers, in spite of the executions that were meant to break her resolve, thus honouring her oath to the organization, which she had taken that very day “in a thrilling and unforgettable moment in the dark of the night by the side of the road.”<sup>181</sup> The next morning, she discovered that the Volunteers were all in fact alive.

Berkeley also recalls, “Crown agents in mufti went into the houses and shot men in front of their wives. Or, worse still, ordered the women into one room, and shot men in another room where on more than one occasion a husband bled to death while his wife heard him groaning on the other side of the partition.”<sup>182</sup> In another instance, a mother received a notice of death from the Black and Tans intended for her son. A witness relayed that “the suspense, fear and the dread that the above notice will be executed are slowly but surely killing her.”<sup>183</sup> Thus, even when not physically harming their female victims, members of the Crown Forces ensured that the trauma of these events, or fear that they might take place in one’s home, impressed themselves on the

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<sup>180</sup> BMH WS#: 404, Mrs. McWhinney (Linda Kearns), 6.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> BMH WS#: 994, George F. Berkeley, 32.

<sup>183</sup> NLI MS 10,556 (4).

minds of Irish women. To be sure, men were also threatened. However, as Clark notes, “attacks on the home during the revolutionary period arguably affected women more seriously than they did the men at whom the violence was purportedly aimed.”<sup>184</sup>

The consequences of this psychological violence are equally gendered. According to the 1920 republican pamphlet “Women and Children Under the Terror,” “[o]wing to the merciless pressure exerted unceasingly over the people by the Army of Occupation, there [were] numerous cases of premature births, haemorrhage, still-born children and grave complications at birth resulting in the terrible nervous strain and loss of sleep which is the common lot of women in the Martial Law Areas.”<sup>185</sup> These serious complications are distinctly women’s health issues, further displaying how sex was implicated in the long-lasting consequences of this violence.<sup>186</sup>

These crimes were noticed by apologists and opponents alike. Despite claims that “when the English fought like men, the Irish burned and murdered and ran away like savages,” British newspapers published stories of assaults on Irish women, and related opinion pieces.<sup>187</sup> An “Anti-Reprisals Association” was established by Mary Mackenzie on Fleet Street, the very heart of the press in London, denouncing the “reign of terror” in Ireland.<sup>188</sup> Others opposed the nature of such excesses in Ireland less for the harm done to victims, than because “it is only by winning with unsoiled hands that [the British] may retain [their] national self-respect and prestige in Ireland.”<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Clark, 192.

<sup>185</sup> NLI MS, 556(8), “Women and Children Under the Terror,” April 17, 1920, 2.

<sup>186</sup> These consequences also attacked the sacred image of woman as mother, which could incite further outrage amongst the ranks of IRA, as the organization’s viewed a woman’s role as mother as essential to appropriate femininity.

<sup>187</sup> PA UK, LG/H/213, “True to Type,” *Morning Post*, November 23, 1920.

<sup>188</sup> PA UK BL/102/6/10.

<sup>189</sup> PA UK LG/H/213, “Discipline Amongst the Forces,” *The Times*, March 1, 1921.

Some pieces in British newspapers, however, rationalized and even defended the actions of Crown forces in Ireland. A column in the *Manchester Guardian* from October 1920 stated “obviously police must not take the law into their own hands, but equally obviously a flare of temper under provocation was going to lead to just that.”<sup>190</sup> The war aggravated “the horrible moral disease from which the ... cruel, lawless and cowardly [...] Irish suffer,”<sup>191</sup> which required British forces to act as they did. Some commentators were resigned to the inevitability of Crown Forces using such tactics in the face of the apparent “moral disease” of the Irish in saying that “the employment of soldiers as police, and police as soldiers, could have had no other result than what had actually occurred.”<sup>192</sup> A *Times* article from October 11, 1920 titled “Irish Crime – The Prime Minister on Reprisals – Dominion Home Rule Condemned” claimed that guerrilla war removed the element of “fair chance” in combat, and criticized the IRA’s habit of not wearing recognizable uniforms by commenting that there was no “decency” in abstaining from a recognizable war effort.<sup>193</sup> The Auxiliaries’ own news organ, *the Weekly Summary*, succinctly and directly stated

When a war has begun the soldier has only one point of view, and a single duty, which is to defeat the enemy. Leaving political, and to a great extent ethical, considerations to others, he has to devise means for achieving his aim swiftly and effectively. He must study the hostile methods of warfare and contrive plans to counteract them. In so doing he may sometimes find it necessary to adopt or imitate practices he condemns.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> PA UK, LG/H/213, *Manchester Guardian*, October 27, 1920.

<sup>191</sup> PA UK, LG/H/213, Lord Hugh Cecil, “The Irish Murders – Condemnation of Reprisals – The Duty of Detection,” *The Times*, October 29, 1920.

<sup>192</sup> PA UK, LG/H/213, *Manchester Guardian*, October 27, 1920.

<sup>193</sup> PA UK, LG/H/213, *The Times*, “Irish Crime – The Prime Minister on Reprisals – Dominion Home Rule Condemned,” October 11, 1920.

<sup>194</sup> UCD P88/115, “A British View of the Situation – ‘Republican’ Methods of Warfare,” *The Weekly Summary*, no.9 – October 8, 1920, 4.

In a 1920 Report of the Inspector General of the RIC, explanations and excuses were pondered as to why British ex-servicemen, victors of the First World War and figureheads for chivalry and empire, committed these crimes. The Inspector General claimed that Crown Forces were collected in “small bodies scattered through the country and not under constant supervision of an officer,”<sup>195</sup> and that “that the men suffering from nerve strain and exasperated by the murder and maiming of their comrades may get entirely out of hand and retaliate.”<sup>196</sup> In a reference to post-traumatic stress, acts of aggression on a woman (which would have been seen as distinctly unmanly in the realm of British chivalric masculinity) were defended as forgivable and thoroughly masculine, in their ability to perform World War I experience and soldierly comradeship. The men suppressed their pain and performed toughness, central to the post-muscular Christianity brand of British martial masculinity explored in chapter one.

By comparing the content of these police reports with testimonies in the journals of British servicemen, it becomes clearer that the way Irish women’s bodies were harmed was related to the reforging of a British martial masculinity, discursively used in the “doing” of military manliness under threat in Ireland. To begin, these acts must be contextualized in the policy of reprisals. Peter Hart has argued that the escalation of violence between the IRA and Crown Forces can be explained by a “tit-for-tat cycle” involving “the overriding motive of revenge, the ability of anonymous gunmen on either side to do what they liked, the frequently random or mistaken choice in victims, and their helplessness.”<sup>197</sup> Townshend notes, “it seems beyond question that, while reprisals

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<sup>195</sup> PA UK, BL/102/5/19, “Report of Inspector General of Royal Irish Constabulary,” May 9, 1920, p.1.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies*, 79.

were officially condemned, the condemnation was limited to the indiscriminate ‘bad’ reprisals. ‘Good’ reprisals, targeted assassinations were encouraged.”<sup>198</sup> Still, there is evidence of members of Crown Forces wishing to distance themselves from their actions in Ireland. Brigadier Frederick Clarke, lieutenant in the Essex Regiment, recalls an “Essex expression: ‘I did not like myself in Ireland.’”<sup>199</sup> Clarke goes on to emphasize, “I do not think anybody else did either.”<sup>200</sup> Far from reporting valiant demonstrations of British military prowess against Irish guerrillas in the field, the diary entries of many British servicemen communicate a mounting sense of frustration with their part in the war against Ireland. Colonel F.O. Cave’s journal recalls February 21, 1921 being a “very slow day.”<sup>201</sup> His March 3<sup>rd</sup> entry for that year recalls a “pouring wet day. Nothing doing.”<sup>202</sup> Lieutenant Colonel J.B. Jarvis records May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1920 as a “very dull” day.<sup>203</sup> J.P Swindlehurst’s diary entry for January 8, 1921 claims “we have come over here to finish our time, doing guards, curfew patrols, street patrols, and heaven knows what else.”<sup>204</sup> Less than a week later, he states, “little has happened that we know of, it just seems to be a constant repetition of guards and other duties and we are more or less resigned to the situation.”<sup>205</sup> His diary contains no entries from the end of

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<sup>198</sup> Townshend, *The Republic*, 168.

<sup>199</sup> “Brigadier Frederick Clarke,” in *British Voices from the Irish War of Independence 1918-1921 – The Words of British Servicemen who Served There*, ed. William Sheehan (Cork: The Collins Press, 2007), 76.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> IWM UK 10558 a, Box P153.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> IWM UK 98/11/1.

<sup>204</sup> IWM UK 10415, Box P 538.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

January until February 28<sup>th</sup>, as Swindlehurst asserts, “I gave up, for the simple reason, that each day was a repetition of the day previous...”<sup>206</sup>

Crown Forces’ perceived masculinity thus evolved, or further devolved, in the context of war, incorporating what would have previously been considered “unmasculine” actions into the toughness, the firmness and oppressive nature of Edwardian Britain’s martial masculinity. An unidentified woman recalled being used as a scapegoat for local republican groups, “the language [Crown Forces] used was of a most frightful description, and their threats were directed through us to the general body of Sinn Fein.”<sup>207</sup> Often carried in “out-of-the-war country villages, where concealment was far more easy,” violence on women can be seen as a militarized activity advancing a campaign to erode the masculinity of the IRA and the viability of their cause.<sup>208</sup> Guerrilla warfare “presents no objective to the enemy – it leaves him nothing to take hold of. When the enemy has no definite military objective his efforts are quite unavailing.”<sup>209</sup> While the guerrilla is “everywhere all the time, but nowhere at a given moment,” Irish women were in the home, on the farm, walking streets, and running errands in town.<sup>210</sup>

Female victims received the sympathy and admiration of their community for, in Berkeley’s own words, he was

Greatly struck by these girls’ extraordinary courage and defiant spirit. [...] And I came to the conclusion that the Auxiliaries, when they had nothing better to do of an evening, took advantage of their defenseless condition and their open rebellion to come round and amuse themselves

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> NLI MS, 556(2), “To Miss M- - -, From M- - - C - - -.”

<sup>208</sup> BMH WS#: 994, George F. Berkeley, 99.

<sup>209</sup> NLI MS 22,160, J.J. O’Connell, “Guerilla warfare as the Standard Form?,” 5.

<sup>210</sup> UCD P17a/1, “Training Memo no. 2 (1921) – Function as A.S. Units,” 10-14.

by humiliating them and tyrannizing over them.”<sup>211</sup>

These acts often achieved their goal of wearing away IRA morale. Louise Ryan quotes Ernie O’Malley’s reflection on his feelings about Black and Tan reprisals: “there was silence for a time as we watched, helpless, [... feeling] cowardly and miserable.”<sup>212</sup>

Intervention would have presumably been too risky, as the loss of even a few Volunteers had a deep impact on the small scale IRA, especially in the face of the British Army.

“Fear [... and] cowardice,” as Volunteer Seán Prendergast states, are “unmanly failings.”<sup>213</sup> This sentiment was shared by Volunteer John Duffy, an IRA intelligence officer operating within the RIC, in his recollection of receiving a letter from Michael Collins concerning Duffy’s intention to leave the RIC. According to Duffy’s testimony, “Collins sent down a courier [...] with instructions in his own handwriting that under no circumstances was I to leave the Force and that if I did so I would be looked upon as a ‘coward.’ The word ‘coward’ decided my determination to remain on.”<sup>214</sup>

Many of the Crown Forces’ victims were not deliberately selected. As this chapter has demonstrated, women in vulnerable situations were victims of spontaneous and opportunistic violence, which was intended to reverberate across the ranks of the IRA. There is, however, evidence of more targeted victimization. Galway Volunteer Thomas Mannion’s sister Nora was seized by a Black and Tan who asserted “[w]e’re going to cut your locks, lass.”<sup>215</sup> Madge Daly, sister of Edward Daly executed after the 1916 Rising and member of Cumann na mBan, recalled “[t]he British has a special

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ryan, “Drunken Tans,” 83.

<sup>213</sup> BMH WS#: 755, Seán Prendergast, 127.

<sup>214</sup> BMH WS#: 580, John Duffy, 7.

<sup>215</sup> BMH WS#: 1408, Thomas Mannion, 15.

hatred of Cumann na mBan.”<sup>216</sup> Because of this, and her brother’s “treason,” Daly recalled that her sister was “dragged out of the house one night, her hair shorn off and her hand cut with a razor.”<sup>217</sup> Ryan has posited that in the case of Crown Forces’ view of Cumann na mBan’s military activity, Republicans should be made to feel like “weak men who cannot control their frenzied women.”<sup>218</sup> It can be argued that the targeting of Cumann na mBan was similarly meant to evoke feelings of weakness and emasculation.

There is also a more disturbing side to the IRA’s reaction to Crown Force violence on Irish women. Their sentiments were not always caused by anger over and sympathy for their countrywomen’s sufferings. Brigadier Clarke recalls an incident that took place outside the barracks his regiment was stationed at in 1921. “One day [rank and file Volunteers] started to sing an absurd propaganda song of which the following is one verse:

Ireland’s maidens, pure as snowdrops  
Shall I say it, God I must,  
They were outraged of their virtue  
By the hounds of England’s lust<sup>219</sup>

This episode was taken as a “joke” by Clarke, who had witnessed the group of Volunteers driving by for weeks, becoming increasingly bold.<sup>220</sup> They returned again and sang “We are the boys of Kilmichael, Who laid the Black and Tans low.”<sup>221</sup> In response, the regiment sang

We are the boys of the Essex

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<sup>216</sup> BMH WS#: 855, Madge Daly, 9.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Louise Ryan, “Splendidly Silent: Representing Irish Women, 1919-1923,” in *Re-presenting the Past: Women and History*, eds. Ann-Marie Gallagher, Cathy Lubelska and Louise Ryan (Harlow: Longman Publishers, 2001), 30.

<sup>219</sup> Sheehan ed., 67.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Sheehan ed., 67.

So brave, so true and so bold,  
 We fight for the flag of ole England,  
 And b[ugge]r the Green, White and Gold<sup>222</sup>

After this exchange, Clarke recalls “one Saturday morning shortly after [...] a gang of fishwives arrived and spread a lot of evil smelling fish on the pavement outside the barracks.”<sup>223</sup> In Clarke’s narrative, the IRA uses the “outraging” of women as part of provocative banter, or pranking, between warring factions. The Crown Forces’ defeat at Kilmichael, the most successful ambush led by the “boys” Tom Barry’s flying column of the West Cork IRA, is juxtaposed with violence on “maidens” with the intent of belittling British “hounds” driven by “lust.” The IRA used the same occasion to mock the Regiment for its failure at Kilmichael. Arguably, the priority in this exchange was to combat notions of the IRA “boys”’ emasculation and to emphasize the devolution of the English “hounds.” Here we see conflicting narratives, both appropriating the act of violence on women to posture different, and ultimately competing martial masculinities the RIC’s stanza communicates how the “brave” and “bold” boys of Essex are produced in and by the buggery of the Green, White and Gold. The Volunteers’ perspective conveyed here through song, constitutes the purity of Ireland’s women through the outraging, as the English “hounds” are established in the same act. It is also worth noting that the censored word, “bugger,” furthers the use of sexual violence rhetoric, as the “boys of Essex” sing of defiling the tricolour.

Per the editors of *Performances of Violence*, violence is “communicative,” and embedded in “rituals and enactments.”<sup>224</sup> This section has discussed the forms of

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<sup>222</sup> Sheehan ed., 67-68.

<sup>223</sup> Sheehan ed., 68-69.

<sup>224</sup> Sarat, Basler and Dumm, eds., *Performances of Violence*, 2.

violence – sexual assault, haircutting, psychological abuse, violent home raids and the destruction of personal property – that women were subjected to by Crown Forces during the War of Independence. It argued that these violent acts are examples of gender performance in light of what they communicate and enact vis-à-vis expectations of British martial masculinity. In the context of war, women's bodies – personifying the Ireland that the IRA claimed to be defending – were used as performative sites upon which the toughness and firmness of British soldiers were established through violence. These acts also served the purpose of eroding the IRA's sense of its own masculinity, exposing their inability to protect the Irish people and thus undermining the effectiveness of its military enterprise. As the following chapter discusses, gender violence was also unleashed on Irish women by republican soldiers. In the IRA worldview, however, it was crucially performed for different reasons and with different consequences.

### CHAPTER III: GENDER PERFORMED – REPUBLICAN VIOLENCE ON WOMEN

*“... their own countrymen may come to extract vengeance for lack of sympathy to their own...”*<sup>225</sup>

(J.P. Swindlehurst, 1921)

In the War of Independence, Crown Forces were not the only perpetrators of violence on Irishwomen. The IRA physically assaulted women as punishment for suspected informing, as well as for being romantically involved with members of the Crown Forces, among other things. Michael Higgins of the Sylane Company, Tuam Battalion, county Galway recalls “shearing the hair off a young girl” who had “written to a [RIC] man, giving him information about Volunteer activities.”<sup>226</sup> In his BMH Witness Statement Thomas Markey, Commandant of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Fingal Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Eastern Division, County Dublin explains what was done when “letters from girls to soldiers [...] giving information about [the IRA]” were discovered amongst intercepted mail.<sup>227</sup> “The hair of such girls”<sup>228</sup> “was usually cut off [...] as this marked them out as informers or girls who kept company with the enemy troops.”<sup>229</sup> In the words of George Berkeley, “the girls were not arrested, but they were assaulted, beaten and kicked.”<sup>230</sup> Volunteer Michael Higgins recalls confronting a girl who had written a letter providing information on the Volunteers. His companion, “Brigadier Fogarty gave [the girl and

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<sup>225</sup> IWM UK, J P Swindlehurst Private Papers, 10415, Box P538, Journal Entry January 12, 1921.

<sup>226</sup> BMH WS#: 1247, Michael Higgins, 8.

<sup>227</sup> BMH WS#: 1446, Thomas Markey, 16.

<sup>228</sup> It should be noted that there is great disparity in the detail of accounts of women who experienced the violence themselves. Some of these are the autobiographical accounts of Cumann na mBan activists, and are more likely to be “confident [and] assertive” than those of ordinary citizens who anonymously shared their testimony to collectors like Sheehy Skeffington (Ryan 77). For this reason, some of the examples in this essay are lacking place names, dates and names, while others are richer in this type of detail.

<sup>229</sup> Markey, 16.

<sup>230</sup> BMH WS#: 994, George F. Berkeley, 82.

her family] a lecture on the gravity of the offence and said she was being treated leniently in having her hair cut off” in punishment.<sup>231</sup>

These are examples of a gender mitigating violence, as men accused of the same atrocity would most likely have been executed. Indeed, IRA GHQ issued a directive on the subject of “Women Spies,” outlining that the punishment of death for a man guilty of informing was to be mitigated for female spies on account of their sex.<sup>232</sup> Moreover, IRA orders were that “a formal public statement of the fact of the conviction shall be issued in poster or leaflet form or both according to local circumstances, as a warning and a preventative” in order to “neutralise” female spies.<sup>233</sup> Evidence from the period confirms that lethal violence on women was very rare during the War of Independence. Statistical work has been completed by scholars like Brian Hughes that allows us to contextualize violence on women in the macro narrative of the military violence, and offers a snapshot of the nature of punishment inflicted on women by the IRA. Specifically, Hughes’ case study comprises “a sample of 120 non-lethal outrages directed specifically against women, taken from précis compiled by the RIC in incidents against police, their families, and their tradesmen and suppliers.”<sup>234</sup> Over 50 per cent of reported outrages were in the form of threatening letters or notices. Hughes found that “the most common act of physical violence carried out against women by the IRA was the cutting of hair, with 27 cases (23 per cent) found among the samples.”<sup>235</sup> Well-known cases like the death of Ellen Quinn, killed by a bullet ricochet, are exceptional,

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<sup>231</sup> BMH WS#: 247, Michael Higgins, 8.

<sup>232</sup> NLI MSS 900/9 (4).

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Brian Hughes, *Defying the IRA? Intimidation, Coercion and Communities during the Irish Revolution* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 138.

<sup>235</sup> Hughes, 140.

generally the result of accidents or what is now called “collateral damage.”<sup>236</sup> Per gender norms during the Edwardian period, and as exemplified by the horror expressed in British newspapers in response to rumours of outrages on women, the death, or indeed harming, of a woman on political or military charges was considered inappropriate. Indeed, this understanding had important consequences on Irish revolutionary history, as Countess Constance “Markievicz was exempted from execution [after the failure of the 1916 Rising in spite of her important role] because of ‘the gender specific values which impacted upon the politics of the era.’”<sup>237</sup>

Hair shearing by the IRA was deliberate in its victimization, and was rarely accompanied by acts of sexual violence. Irish women suspected of espionage or informing were frequently punished in such a way that was physically punitive, othered them from their community but also rendered them undesirable women, arguably in the hopes of making them physically unattractive to their British suitors, and thus unable to undermine the Irish state through fraternizing with the enemy. According to Captain Michael Walsh’s Witness Statement, the RIC “displayed annoyance when their girl friends had their hair bobbed” by the IRA.<sup>238</sup> In other words, while killing a woman was not an acceptable form of punishment, rendering her appearance and status “unfeminine” was considered an entirely appropriate punitive measure.

As Tammy Proctor argues, in the gendered view of warfare, “sacrifices were required, and women’s duties were clear: encourage men to war service, wait patiently,

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<sup>236</sup> Leeson, 11.

<sup>237</sup> Mark McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising: Explorations of History-Making, Commemoration & Heritage in Modern Times* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 95.

<sup>238</sup> BMH WS#: 786, Michael Walsh, 9.

and support the war emotionally, physically and materially.”<sup>239</sup> From the perspective of the IRA, women who were known to associate with the enemy, such as the girlfriends and wives of RIC men, violated these feminized duties. A “large number of suspects were [...] considered ‘fast.’”<sup>240</sup> Hart has isolated at least one case, a Mrs. Marshall of Cork City, who was suspected to have “given information to the military which led to the arrest of the late Lord Mayor of Cork.”<sup>241</sup> According to British Army intelligence, she had not given any information. Hart posits that this was a case of IRA “incompetence,” but also suggests “her real crime [...] was to have been a garrison seamstress and a ‘woman of easy virtue.’”<sup>242</sup> As a result, such women were targeted, as it was assumed they were prone to informing. In his BMH statement, Amos Reidy recalls, “two local [Limerick] girls who associated with the military about this time had their hair cut by the IRA.”<sup>243</sup> These acts were often carried out in a context of physical violence and turned vicious in nature, as was the case in post-World War II France. Michael Collins’<sup>244</sup> Limerick Company cut the hair of two girls and “tared them” for their responsibility in providing information that led to a Black and Tan raid, echoing a type of violence more typical to eighteenth century Ireland.<sup>245</sup> In tandem with such

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<sup>239</sup> Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War, 1914-1918* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 31.

<sup>240</sup> Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies*, 310.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> BMH WS#: 1021, Amos Reidy, 5.

<sup>244</sup> Not to be confused with Michael Collins, Minister of Finance and later Director of Intelligence.

<sup>245</sup> BMH WS#: 1301, Michael Collins, 7; This case involving tarring remains rare in the context of early twentieth century Ireland, but recalls a form of violence employed elsewhere in Ireland’s revolutionary history, namely the 1798 Rising. Moreover, trends in academic writing on 1798 are also concerned with challenging preconceptions about the nature of violence on women during war in Ireland. See Catherine O’Connor, “The Experience of Women in the Rebellion of 1798 in Wexford,” *The Past: The Organ of the Úi Cinsealaigh Historical Society* 24 (2003), 95-106 and Michael Durey, “Abduction and Rape in Ireland in the Era of the 1798 Rebellion,” *Eighteenth Century Ireland/ Iris an dá chultúr* 21 (2006), 27-47.

attacks, women were often victims of psychological abuse. Some women recall never laying “down at night without the fear of having an invasion of these armed bands.”<sup>246</sup>

Given how they “constructed themselves as [the] chivalrous, clean, sober, well disciplined and pious” protectors of their community, how did the IRA justify such violence against civilian women?<sup>247</sup> As an extension of their own conservative nationalist values, and given the nature of the particular brand of masculinity performed by the organization, the IRA was unforgiving of women who negated these values. As analysis of the iconography from the period reveals, “the feminization of [the Irish] nation had particular implications for the construction of womanhood within the nation.”<sup>248</sup> Women were viewed as the purest inheritors of the national tradition, “guarantors of their men’s status, bearers of national honour and the scapegoats of national identity.”<sup>249</sup> Consequently, for the IRA, preserving the integrity of the Irish Republic necessitated the punishment of those who deviated from the national ideal, especially women, who were seen to have a unique moral role to play. The IRA’s self-perception as protectors of the people depended on expelling people who undermined communal support, including women who consorted with the enemy. However, such coercive actions had to be moderated so as not to alienate public support. The community, as historically proven by boycotts during episodes of agrarian violence such as the Land War, could sanction certain kinds of “insider violence.”<sup>250</sup> As such, women who misrepresented Ireland needed to be singled out in their communities, and othered

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<sup>246</sup> NLI MS, 556(8), “War on Women in Ireland,” 1.

<sup>247</sup> Ryan, “Drunken Tans,” 86.

<sup>248</sup> Ryan, “Drunken Tans,” 75.

<sup>249</sup> Ryan, “Drunken Tans,” 76.

<sup>250</sup> See Gale E. Christianson, “Secret Societies and Agrarian Violence in Ireland, 1790-1840,” *Agricultural History* 46.3 (July 1972), 369-384.

in a way that denoted they were not the kind of women worthy of IRA protection. James Maloney, Captain of Bruff Company and Battalion Adjutant in county Limerick claims that women who consorted with the enemy were “a real danger to the movement and gave [a] bad example.<sup>251</sup> While “years later dame fashion was to dictate bobbed hair,” during the “period of revolution it was deemed shameful,” therefore the “bob” would serve as a marker of traitorous activity.<sup>252</sup> Echoed by Leo Buckley of County Cork, “short hair was completely out of fashion at the period, and the appearance of a girl with ‘bobbed’ hair clearly denoted her way of life” to her neighbours.<sup>253</sup> Such descriptions fundamentally understate the brutal nature of the act: blunt instruments were used, skin was penetrated, blood was spilled. The result was anything but a coiffed “bob.” The trivializing language employed here, attempting to further situate the consequences of a traumatic physical attack in the stereotypically female realm of fashion and aesthetics, provides further insight on how punishment was mediated according to perceived gender norms.

The stylized ideal of Volunteer masculinity, on the one hand, and IRA violence against women on the other, may seem like incongruent components of the same revolutionary culture, especially when considering sexualized violence. The English newspaper the *Daily News* explicitly stated, “it is a matter of general knowledge that acts of a [sexual] kind are not committed in Ireland by Irishmen, all sexual outrage being regarded on the part of the Irish nation with exceptional horror.”<sup>254</sup> It is difficult to find

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<sup>251</sup> BMH WS#: 1525, James Maloney, Captain IRA, Limerick, 1921, 27.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> BMH WS#: 1714, Leo Buckley, Officer IRA, Cork, 1921, 3.

<sup>254</sup> PA UK, LG/H/213, Mrs. Patrick Lawrence, “Irish Women Under the Terror,” *The Daily News* June 6, 1921.

evidence of sexual assault by the IRA. This is not to say that it did not happen: given research's contingency on the availability of reported acts of sexual violence, and how Edwardian Ireland presented a social climate hostile to such reporting, evidence is limited. However, the *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* published in 1922 contains the testimony of an anonymous woman who stated that in August 1920, IRA members "put three pig rings into her buttocks with pincers [as s]he had been supplying the police with milk."<sup>255</sup>

In *The Inner and Outer Ireland*, the author attempts to rationalize the Volunteers' "methods" in saying:

I am trying to explain the mood of my countrymen to-day. I think highly of them but I do not think Ireland is by any means an Island of Saints, and things have been done by Irishmen which I at least will not attempt to defend... / But it is only fair to say that two years of raids, arrests and imprisonments, of which there were many thousands, preceded the adoption of their present methods by the Volunteers.<sup>256</sup>

This circuitous sort of language acknowledges the crimes that were committed whilst apologizing for them. This passage hints to avenues of further exploration: euphemisms. The term "outrage" arguably conceals more than it reveals. Moreover, Ryan implores us to take seriously the euphemism of "humiliation" when seeking evidence of sexual violence in primary sources.<sup>257</sup>

This problem of limited sources and euphemistic language do not preclude, however, an analysis of how acts of violence mediated by gender performed notions of masculinity and femininity. Indeed, why did the IRA assault, harass and humiliate female members of the nationalist community? How could these violent actions be

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<sup>255</sup> *Report of the Labour Commission to Ireland* (London: Caledonian Press, 1922), 80-81.

<sup>256</sup> A.E., *The Inner and Outer Ireland* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1921), 10-11.

<sup>257</sup> Ryan, "Drunken Tans," 93.

excused within a worldview that condemned Crown Forces for similar mistreatment of Irish women? In order to answer this question, we must seek revisit publications like the *Fianna Handbook* and *An tÓglách*. Upon further exploration, it becomes clear that the nature of the punishment rendered was also indicative of the way IRA men performed their gender and wartime “duty.” Moreover, violence on women was a means to advance a broader ‘war effort,’ just as it was for Crown Forces, but in a crucially different way.

Memoirs written by those who lived through the War of Independence often recall long periods of inactivity and a great deal of waiting.<sup>258</sup> Sean O’Faoláin, a former Volunteer and prolific writer, recalls that

The great mass of us rank and filers were given such undemanding if essential jobs as the gathering of more or less information, watching over the billets of fighters, scouting, carrying dispatches... helping to trench roads or fell trees ... otherwise we hung around, drilled, waited, felt nervy, groused and were supremely proud whenever even the most modest task made us feel we were doing something positive in the struggle for independence.<sup>259</sup>

An *An tÓglách* article titled “The Value of Small Jobs” further aggravates this tension in stressing that “all over the country opportunities for minor political activity ... present themselves: every one of these should be seized with eagerness.”<sup>260</sup> It is within this liminal space, in isolated rural Ireland where expectation of action is not suitable to the lived reality, that the dangerous potential of the “small jobs” is manifest. For a generation of men who validated their masculinity through seizing “with eagerness” the

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<sup>258</sup> David Fitzpatrick has made a similar argument in discussing the role of rural boredom in radicalizing and mobilizing young men, particularly in reference to agrarian violence. See “Geography of Irish Nationalism,” 131.

<sup>259</sup> Ferriter, *Transformation*, 226.

<sup>260</sup> *An tÓglách* (Vol. 3, no. 5), April 22, 1921, p.3.

opportunity to act in any way that advanced the cause of nation, it can be argued that punishing women for the transgression of gender – informing, spying, and consorting with the enemy – was not simply an intrinsically militarized and politicized act, but also a way of performing masculinity and punishing transgressions of Irish femininity. Indeed, the oath taken by members of the IRA presents the suggestion that defending the nation involved action against “all enemies, foreign and domestic,” with the latter term arguably having a double meaning.<sup>261</sup> Moreover, an April 22 1921 article in *An tÓglách* makes clear that the IRA’s central demand on the Irish people: “it is the *moral duty* of the people of Ireland to give [the Volunteers] every assistance and encouragement in the power.”<sup>262</sup> The same article presents a binary framework through which Volunteers should consider both themselves and their actions. According to IRA GHQ, “the only question to ask any Irishman is: ‘Are you for Ireland or for England[?]’”<sup>263</sup> In answering, “for Ireland,” Volunteers need “understand clearly their unassailable moral position and the proud attitude in which they stand defending the rights and liberties of [...] Ireland.”<sup>264</sup> And while Volunteers were cautioned not to take “action in civil matters,” it was apparently “the right as well as the duty of all persons to interfere in as organised and effective a way as possible to prevent practices which tend towards disorder or demoralization in social life.”<sup>265</sup> Additionally, “the military atmosphere should permeate every Volunteer function and everything appertaining to the Volunteer.”<sup>266</sup> The line

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<sup>261</sup> NLI, MS 44,044/1. In this case, the term domestic means on Irish soil as opposed to British soil, versus the use of the term “domestic” to refer to the home previously in this thesis.

<sup>262</sup> *An tÓglách*, (Vol.3, No. 5) April 22 1921, 1.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> *An tÓglách*, (Vol. 3, no. 6), May 1 1921, 2.

<sup>265</sup> NLI MSS 091/4.

<sup>266</sup> NLI MSS 901/68.

between civil matters and military matters was thus blurred, if not rendered entirely arbitrary.<sup>267</sup>

From the Volunteer perspective, the way such everyday violence was wielded helped to uphold ideals of Irish manhood. Republicans “self-consciously challenged British representations of chivalry by portraying British forces as inflictors of mindless violence.”<sup>268</sup> For example, a Volunteer recalled that “throughout the whole period of the guerrilla war in Ireland, the Republican troops, in the teeth of every inducement to the contrary, have displayed a chivalry difficult to equal in any war in history.”<sup>269</sup> The guerrilla war, then, was seen as the embodiment of not merely the nation’s strength, but of its manhood and masculinity. *An tÓglách* articles consistently reminded Volunteer readers that the IRA was the “armed and disciplined young manhood of Ireland,” and that by continuing “steadily with its successful guerrilla offensive, observing the rules of civilized warfare,” it would defeat the “cowardly bullies” of the Crown Forces through steadfast commitment to the moral integrity of the Irish nation.<sup>270</sup> By harnessing Ireland’s resources in the face of the challenge presented by the British Army, the “moral[e] and discipline of the enemy [... was] broken down.”<sup>271</sup> In spite of the fact that a life on the run was riddled with discomforts from “Column Itch” and “Trench Foot”<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> It should be noted that any “policing” on the part of the IRA would not present a top-down policy, as this would have fallen under the purview of the Irish Republican Police, who “played an important role in ensuring the maintenance of law and order,” as “social unrest could derail the independence campaign.” See Coleman, *The Irish Revolution*, 58.

<sup>268</sup> Miller, 127.

<sup>269</sup> UCD P151/13, “The Treatment of British Soldiers,” June 8, 1921, 1

<sup>270</sup> *An tÓglách* (Vol. 2, no. 13), June 15 1920, 1; *An tÓglách* (Vol. 2, no. 20), October 1 1920, 4; *An tÓglách* (Vol. 1., no. 10), February 1 1919, 4.

<sup>271</sup> *An tÓglách* (Vol. 2, no. 9), April 15 1920, 1.

<sup>272</sup> The colloquial terms for scabies, and the septic condition feet would succumb to in wet military boots. See BMH WS: #1547, Michael Murphy, 41.

to hunger and exposure, guerrillas were reminded, “soldiers are expected to prioritize the need of their community, or nation, above their own physical discomfort.”<sup>273</sup>

In a letter from August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Volunteer Sean Mahony explained to his brother Tom that “somehow I would consider [days off] a National sin when there is work to be done.”<sup>274</sup> The nature of “work to be done” by the IRA, in some Volunteers’ minds, thus situated moral policing squarely within the movement’s militarized and political “initiatives.” In a worldview that entangled nation and gender, not only Irish women who informed against the IRA, but those who simply fraternized with Crown Forces fell into the category of “domestic enemies.” Some of the women accused of espionage and informing had possibly been engaged in such activities. Nevertheless, the nature of the violence inflicted on hundreds of women by the IRA can be seen as punishment for transgressing against both the nation, and the moral standards imposed on their gender in a nationalist vision.

Judith Butler’s theoretical work is useful in highlighting the gendered considerations of politicalized and militarized acts. Violence, which has already been demonstrated as being mediated by gendered norms, also genders the body as “pervasive political and cultural structures are enacted and reproduced through individual acts and practices [of violence].”<sup>275</sup> In Butler’s theoretical framework, these acts and practices produce an idealized Irish femininity by harming those who do not uphold its values. This refers to what Butler describes as regulation by “clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions,” the gender policing here perpetuates the

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<sup>273</sup> Miller 123.

<sup>274</sup> NLI MS 44, 109 (2), Letter 28.

<sup>275</sup> Butler, 190; Jagger, 28.

‘reality’ of gender’s “naturalness.”<sup>276</sup> Women who were punished by the IRA, however, symbolized a corrupted form of femininity, separated and othered from the ideal form as indicated by their shorn hair or other punishment, for socializing with Crown Forces members or informing – a direct violation of the supportive role women were intended to play in war. Whereas Crown Forces violence against female republicans and civilians was meant to undermine the IRA’s campaign, IRA violence against women can be seen as extension of their view of what was required to uphold the war effort and nation. Violent hair-shearing for example, constituted the protector status of IRA men, as the punishment for gender transgression rendered the victim other, and serves to uphold the idealized, reductive image of Irish femininity.

Shortly after the conclusion of the War of Independence, some members participating in the debates over “The Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland” discussed the scenario of an Irish girl who walked into an English-hosted dance. One delegate lamented over the “hard fight [nationalist Ireland has] had against that sort of thing.”<sup>277</sup> It is clear that the nature of the “hard fight” was not only violent but also conceptual, and it was just as much against empire as non-conforming gender presentation. With the punished woman expelled, her shorn hair symbolic of her crimes, and her ostracizing encouraged, the IRA reconsolidated the community it claimed to be protecting, upheld the Republic it claimed to be defending and safeguarded the masculinity it purported to embody.

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<sup>276</sup> Butler, 194.

<sup>277</sup> Deputies of Dáil Éireann, “Debate on the Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, signed in London on the 6th December 1921: Sessions 14 December 1921 to 10 January 1922,” CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts: a project of University College Cork, College Road, Cork, Ireland— <http://www.ucc.ie/celt>, 117.

## VI: CONCLUSION:

In correspondence with the leaders of the Cork No. 1 Brigade in late 1920, Florence O'Donoghue noted, "some day all these things will be placed in our War Museum," expressing an awareness that he lived through moment in Irish history that would have a deep impact on the nation's shared memory.<sup>278</sup> As Ian Miller argues, it was memories of the "violence inflicted during the War of Independence [that] formed part of a larger lineage of struggle against British hostility; a central theme in Irish collective memory."<sup>279</sup> The 'revolutionary generation' witnessed a momentous time that saw the birth of organizations like the Gaelic League, the Irish Citizen Army, The Irish Republican Army, Sinn Féin, Cumann na mBan and Inghinidhe na hÉireann, the championing of causes like the Irish language, labour, suffrage and gender equality, in addition to the establishment of two states in the North and South respectively – these are all developments that remain at the core of the most important debates in Irish politics today.

Research on the revolutionary period remains valuable, particularly considering that this thesis is being drafted in the midst of the "decade of centenary" anniversaries. Much more so than the subsequent Civil War, the War of Independence remains a historical event of national pride, as British rule was finally overthrown in the south of the island and, through political and military initiatives Ireland's right to self-determination was secured. Remembering this violent history allows the modern state to commemorate its origins, and it also creates opportunities to recognize and reconcile traumatic and taboo events that took place during the war, such as violence on women.

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<sup>278</sup> NLI MS, 192 (1).

<sup>279</sup> Miller, 125.

The ongoing digitization of the Military Service Pensions Collection will yield evidence of the work to be done in this reconciliation. In his application for a military service pension, Patrick Michael Ahern of County Limerick submitted a handwritten document to supplement the question-and-answer forms that Defence Forces Ireland provided in order to ascertain the nature and scope of contribution to the national cause in the War. He details actions he took when he became aware of suspected female informants. “Orders by our superior officer was not to shoot them but to cut off their hair which we did and made a good job of it and it was a good job for men.”<sup>280</sup> Ahern was awarded a pension by the Irish state in 1935, and upon his death in 1979; his widow began receiving an allowance. How will the centenaries of the War of Independence in 2019, 2020 and 2021 contend with such stories? Will they feature in state-organized commemorations or in community-run remembrances, or will they continue to be omitted?

Despite limited archival evidence of violence on women by both sides in the War of Independence, we can intersect analyses of gender and sexual violence with performance, and gender transgression, in continuing the ongoing project of gendering the Irish Revolution. By studying violence in its capacity to perform gender – the understanding of which on the eve of the War of Independence was discussed in chapter 1 – in chapters two and three, this thesis has demonstrated that violent acts on women like hair shearing, assault, and rape were not only militarized and politicized acts that performed martial masculinity, but also punitive measures for transgressing the requirements of appropriate gender for women. Targeting women became a tactic

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<sup>280</sup> MSP34 REF 652/22.

employed by Crown Forces seeking to undermine the community support of an enemy army on the run and to emasculate the self-professed protectors of the Irish people. It also performed the British martial masculinity that was tenuously constituted before and during the Great War, and reconstituted during the War of Independence.

For the IRA, in addition to serving the military function of neutralizing espionage and threats to the republican movement, violence on women was wielded to “other” victims for breaching the IRA’s view of appropriate femininity, and to serve as a warning to others who would dare to undermine the republicans’ efforts or values. Fuelled by republican propaganda praising Volunteer initiative and hyper vigilance against foreign and domestic enemies, and coupled with rigid gender expectations inherited from wider culture, Volunteers subjected women to violent hair shearing and other physical assaults, late night home raids, the destruction of property, as well as other forms of harassment and threat that took both psychological and physical tolls.

The IRA’s military campaign was in its foremost a military and political event, but snapshots of how violence was understood and experienced by Volunteers reveal an awareness that upholding Irish military manliness was crucially important to the war effort. The guerrilla fighter was the epitome of Ireland’s manhood, inheriting a long tradition of resistance, bravery, honour and a commitment to protecting the nation. By extension, conceptualizing the Auxiliary or the Black and Tans’ “masculinity” as diametrically opposed to the IRA’s manliness validated the military tactics of the IRA, while it also upheld morale and discouraged the community’s interaction with British forces.

While contributing to the project of gendering the Revolution, this thesis is far from an exhaustive analysis of the ways gender and violence factored into the Irish Revolution. Gendering history will necessarily be complicated and multifaceted, as the concept of gender is itself. Areas related to this research that deserve further exploration include the gendered narrative of “self-sacrifice” found in letters of republicans awaiting capital punishment. Captured Volunteers performed their understanding of appropriate gender through their bravery in bearing the sentence. Last letters to parents and family members were also often published in newspapers, where Irish men and women witnessed how, even in death, IRA men exhibited their disciplined military training. School children often wrote letters to IRA men awaiting capital punishment in jail, praising their manhood, bravery and honour. A May 7 1921 article in *The Irish Independent* published M. P. Sullivan’s last letter to his mother, in which he bravely wrote “I am in great spirits .... We all die some day, and I am simply going by an early train .... I am delighted to have had such a glorious opportunity of gaining eternal salvation as well as serving my country.”<sup>281</sup>

Another avenue of potential exploration is violence between women, and Irish women’s own discourses of violence. According to one testimony, an Irish woman underwent a forced search conducted by a female searcher employed by Crown Forces who allegedly said “you dirty Irish pig, take off your rags.”<sup>282</sup> An analysis of the rhetoric used by British women about Irish women, and vice versa, during this time could further contribute to our understanding of gender’s role in the War. Additionally, comments like, “four girls had their hair cut off, which was more of a tragedy then than

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<sup>281</sup> INA, “Executed Cobh Boys’ Last Letter,” *The Irish Independent*, May 7, 1921, p. 8.

<sup>282</sup> NLI MS, 556(8), “Women and Children Under the Terror,” April 17, 1920, 8-9.

it would be now,”<sup>283</sup> made by Geraldine Dillon about her countrywomen deserve unpacking to further intersect gender and national identity with other identifying “categories” that mediated how violence was experienced and understood by the revolutionary generation.

One of the central tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis is not only to describe and explain discourse, but also to challenge the innateness of constructed concepts like gender in moving towards “emancipation” from the view that discourse “is” rather than “is created.”<sup>284</sup> Moreover, CDA compels us to take seriously how constructs become materialized in human experience and can have serious consequences, such as the normalizing of hegemonic gender and the subsequent oppression of non-conformists. By incorporating stories of violence on women into the historical narrative of the War of Independence and the Revolution more generally, there exists the potential to complicate our understanding of this crucial moment in Irish history and contribute to the interventions that make Irish historiography vital in ongoing social and political debates.

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<sup>283</sup> BMH WS#: 424, Geraldine Dillon, 10.

<sup>284</sup> Ruth Wodak, “What CDA Is About – A Summary of Its History, Important Concepts and Its Developments,” in *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE Publications, 2009): 10.

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