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Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity in Dublin, 1890-1917

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Abstract

This thesis considers the ways in which advanced nationalist identity was communicated to the broader Irish populace in Dublin from 1890 to 1917. It contends that the performance and communication of advanced nationalist identity is best understood within the context of *fin de siècle* Dublin. During this period the streets formed spaces in which identities, both political and otherwise, were performed and through reciprocal spectatorship were also negotiated and mediated. The public funerals of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in 1915 and Thomas Ashe in 1917 are the subject of close scrutiny. Through analysing the performance of these funerals, this thesis shows how the relationship between the physical space of the city and the body was integral to the performance of advanced nationalist identity. The Easter Rising is presented as a moment of rupture between these two funerals, during which the rebels failed to communicate effectively with their audience. This thesis further argues that in the immediate aftermath of the Rising, material culture in the form of relics and mass-produced ephemera played a vital role in shaping and communicating a narrative of the Rising to make it intelligible to the Irish populace. The successful construction of an interpretive framework meant that, by the time the rebels returned from their various places of internment, public understanding of and identification with both the Rising and advanced nationalist identity more broadly, had dramatically increased.

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Abbreviations

BMH	Bureau of Military History
BMHWS	Bureau of Military History Witness Statement
CBSR	Crime Branch Special Reports
CIF	Criminal Index Files
CSORP	Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers
DCA	Dublin City Archive
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archive
DMP	Dublin Metropolitan Police
GPO	General Post Office
ICA	Irish Citizen Army
INAAVDF	Irish National Aid and Volunteers Dependent Fund
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
IV	Irish Volunteers
KGM	Kilmainham Gaol Museum
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TCDA	Trinity College Dublin Archives
UCD	University College Dublin
UCDA	University College Dublin Archives

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Introduction

I became a home ruler, like my father, but I still don't see why anybody would admire James II who had been such a bad king he had to be put off the throne. And I still can't see why we have to be in favour of the Boers either?

Dennis Johnson, 1910¹

The walls of the lavatory at the Café Cairo are covered in writing - mainly on political subjects. One entry read 'Who are Sinn Feiners anyway?' To which... I was inspired to answer: 'Sinn Feiners are patriots, prepared to die for their country'.

Dennis Johnson, 1917²

Dennis Johnson was the son of a judge from an Ulster Scots Presbyterian background, and lived in the middle-class suburb of Rathmines. He cheered on visiting British Monarchs as they passed through the streets and was a member of the Officer Training Corp at his boarding school in Scotland. In short, Johnson does not fit the traditional image of an advanced nationalist or Sinn Féin supporter. And yet, as the two quotations above illustrate, by 1917 Johnson no longer identified as a Home Ruler and had shifted his support to Sinn Féin. The anecdote about the toilet graffiti at the Café Cairo however, points to something even more profound than a shift in political allegiance. It demonstrates an identification with, and understanding of, militant advanced nationalism on an individual and emotional level.

Furthermore, it illustrates one of the ways in which mundane spaces, not traditionally associated with political action, such as public conveniences,

¹ 'There is nothing to us apart from the story of our lives, diary [of Dennis Johnson] to 1917', Dennis Johnson Collection, MS 10066/179, Trinity College Dublin Archives.

² Ibid.

became sites where attitudes towards national identity were articulated. It is to the intricate ways in which the attitudes and identity of people beyond the advanced nationalist community to nationalism were shaped and communicated that this research seeks to address.

This thesis explores how advanced nationalists communicated their politics, and interpretation of Irish identity, to the wider populace of Dublin between 1890-1917.³ More specifically, it demonstrates how the spaces within Dublin city, and material culture, facilitated the performance, communication and negotiation of advanced nationalist identity so that, by the end of 1917 it formed the dominant discourse of Irish identity more broadly.

Nationalism: Performance, Space and the Body

The study of Irish nationalism draws a broad teleological arch that is divided into a number of key epochs. The period between 1890 and 1918 is recognised as one such timeframe.⁴ It begins with the crisis in parliamentary nationalism caused by the fall and subsequent death of Charles Stuart Parnell and ends with the electoral rise of Sinn Féin on the eve of the War of Independence. This thesis ends a year earlier, in 1917. Whilst the sweeping

³ Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid usefully defines advanced nationalism as 'the broad section of Irish nationalism with a more radical outlook than the constitutional nationalism represented by the Irish Parliamentary party and the United Irish League. Often equated to Fenianism, it is not, however, confined solely to political nationalism; cultural variants were equally important'. See Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion in Ireland, 1916-1918', *The Historical Journal*, 55:3 (2012), pp. 705-729.

⁴ See, David George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1995); R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1988); Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998: War, Peace and Beyond* (2nd edn; Oxford, 2010); Oliver MacDonagh, *Ireland: The Union and its Aftermath* (London, 1977); Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Basingstoke, 1999).

electoral success of Sinn Féin demonstrates the extent of the changes in attitudes towards advanced nationalism this thesis seeks to address the causation behind these attitudinal shifts and thus, the outcome of the 1918 election falls beyond the remit of the present research question. Specifically, the focus of this research is to show that, in Dublin, at least, the material culture and identity performance of advanced nationalists created an increasing level of self-identification with advanced nationalism, and brought the populace into the fold of advanced nationalism.

The rupture in parliamentary nationalism coincided with the emergence of cultural nationalism in Ireland.⁵ Groups such as the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletics Association that were formed in 1893 and 1894 respectively were to provide the loci for a new generation of nationalists, largely formed from the Catholic middle class, who would go on to agitate for Irish independence through parliamentary and extra-parliamentary means.⁶ Home Rule remained the most popular proposal to solve the vexed question of Irish sovereignty, however, from 1913 onwards support for the Irish Parliamentary Party was in decline.⁷ The emergence of the Ulster Volunteers in 1912 in response to the likely success of the Third

⁵ For cultural nationalism see; P. J. Matthews, *Revival: The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Co-Operative Movement* (Cork, 2003); Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London, 1995); Maume, *The Long Gestation*; John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 1987); Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910* (New York, 2008); R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life, Vol. 1: The Apprentice Mage, 1865-1914* (Oxford, 1997).

⁶ For further information on the GAA see Mike Cronin, *Sport and Nationalism in Ireland: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity since 1894* (Dublin, 1999). For further details about the role of the Catholic middle class in Irish nationalism see, Matthews, *Revival*; Maume, *The Long Gestation*; Senia Pašeta, *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Élite, 1879-1922* (Cork, 1999) and Hugh F. Kearney, *Ireland: Contested Ideas of Nationalism and History* (New York, 2007).

⁷ Michael Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland: The Sinn Féin Party, 1916-1923* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 8-9.

Irish Home Rule Bill and their gradual militarisation, culminating in the Larne Gun running, led to the decline in support for the Irish Parliamentary Party and a reciprocal militarisation and arming of Irish nationalists.⁸ The onset of the First World War, the consequent suspension of Irish Home Rule, and debate over the role Irishmen should take in the European conflict, led to a split in the nationalist movement.⁹ By 1916, the Irish Republican Brotherhood was in control of the Irish Volunteers and the stage was set for an open armed insurrection against British Rule in Ireland.¹⁰ The Easter Rising was a military disaster. However, scholarship on the area agrees that the decision of the British authorities to execute and intern so many individuals as a reprisal was disastrous.¹¹ It is these actions, along with the conscription crisis, that caused the change in popular support necessary for the political ascension of Sinn Féin.¹² Within this broad teleological framework scholars have increasingly sought to interrogate the roles and experiences of those whose stories are often subsumed by such overarching political narratives. Consequently, the experience of the Irish during the

⁸ Ibid. For information about Home Rule see Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (Oxford, 2003); Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Question: Two Centuries of Conflict* (Kentucky, 1995); Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1858-1928* (Manchester, 1998) and Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism, 1912-1916* (Oxford, 1998).

⁹ Thomas Hennessey, *Dividing Ireland: World War One and Partition* (London, 1998).

¹⁰ Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928* (Basingstoke, 2005).

¹¹ Benjamin G. Fitzgibbon, *Turning Points of the Irish Revolution: The British Government, Intelligence and the Cost of Indifference, 1912-21* (Basingstoke, 2007); Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Stroud, 1999); Max Caulfield, *The Easter Rebellion* (Dublin, 1995); Clair Wills, *Dublin 1916. The Siege of the GPO* (London, 2009); Jonathan Githens-Mazer, *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising: Cultural and Political Nationalism in Ireland* (Dublin, 2006); Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*; C. Desmond Greaves, *1916 as History: The Myth of Blood Sacrifice* (Dublin, 1991); Adrian Hardiman, "'Shot in Cold Blood' Military Law and Irish Perceptions in the Suppression of the 1916 Rebellion' in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *1916: The Long Revolution* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 225-250; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising, Ireland: Easter, 1916* (Oxford, 2010).

¹² Githens-Mazer, *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising*; Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*.

First World War, more localised studies about the experience of the rise of nationalism beyond Dublin, the role of women, and the role of trade unions have, among others, all been the topics of more detailed analysis and critique.¹³ Additionally, in an attempt to overcome the tendency of research on the rise of nationalism in Ireland to obscure other facets of lived experience in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century, researchers have turned their attentions to the role of the Catholic Church, to highlight the profound effect religious bodies had on Irish society, identity and people's interaction with nationalism.¹⁴ Despite such interventions scholarship has yet to fully grapple with the way individuals who were not explicitly aligned with a nationalist group or organisation made sense of the changing world around them and came, increasingly, to identify with advanced nationalist agenda.¹⁵ In a modest way, this thesis hopes to break fertile ground for further cultivation. The inspiration for this work is a belief that for nationalism to succeed it must be able to communicate an interpretation of

¹³ Keith Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge, 2000); David Fitzpatrick, 'The Geography of Irish Nationalism, 1910-1921' in Charles H. E. Philpin (ed.), *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 403-441; Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998); Richard English, 'Socialism: Socialist Intellectuals and the Irish Revolution' in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 203-224; Ruán O'Donnell (ed.), *The Impact of the 1916 Rising; Among the Nations* (Dublin, 2008); Lisa Weihman, "'Doing My Bit for Ireland": Transgressing Gender in the Easter Rising', *Eire Ireland*, 39:3&4 (2004), pp. 228-249; Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds), *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags* (Dublin, 2004); Susan Shaw Sailer (ed.), *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality* (Gainesville, 2007) and Karen Steele, *Women, Press and Politics During the Irish Revival* (New York, 2007).

¹⁴ See, Oliver MacDonagh, 'Ambiguity in Nationalism: The Case of Ireland' in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism, 1938-1994* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 105-122 and Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1998). Also, Emmet J. Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland and the Fall of Parnell, 1888-1891* (Chapel Hill, 1979) remains a classic study of the growth of the Catholic Church's power and control over social life in modern Ireland.

¹⁵ Some scholars however have sought to address the experience of individuals who were not politically aligned in the context of the changing political landscape and its cultural implications. Two notable examples are, Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary, A True Story* (London, 1999) and Lucy McDiarmid, *The Irish Art of Controversy* (Ithaca: London, 2005).

national identity that individuals are willing to absorb and appropriate. How this identification was achieved is a question that this thesis grapples with, and the examples and analyses it presents demonstrate that the use of space and ephemera were key features of the communication of advanced nationalist identity. In the arguments that follow I have relied upon a number of succinct definitions devised by David George Boyce. He claims that national identity is 'felt by members of a group who define their culture as the national one, and their groups as the true legitimate inheritors of the national territory'.¹⁶ He further defines cultural identity as something that is 'felt by members of a group who either have or have had a distinct or relatively autonomous existence, and who have shared a recognizably common way of life'.¹⁷ The task facing Irish nationalists 'was two-fold: first to inculcate members of the potential nation with a staunch sense of solidarity and then to advertise a cohesive national identity to the outside world'.¹⁸ The scholarship that surrounds nationalism is vast and consequently, this research takes as its starting point the more relevant, and recent interventions in the field that increasingly recognise that

Nationalism names, not only the political project of establishing a state embodying the disembodied ideal of the nation, but also and equally important, the complex cultural and psychological affiliation of individuals to particular national identities and communities.¹⁹

¹⁶ Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, p. 18.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Michelle Facos and Sharon L. Hirsh, 'Introduction' in Michelle Facos and Sharon L. Hirsh (eds), *Art, Culture, and National Identity in Fin de Siècle Europe* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 12.

¹⁹ Michael Mays, *Nation States: The Cultures of Irish Nationalism* (Plymouth, 2007), p. 5. See also, Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1996); John Hutchinson, 'Irish Nationalism' in David George Boyce and Alan O'Day, *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London: New York), pp. 100-120 and Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: New York, 1991), pp. 71-99.

Benedict Anderson's notion of the nation as one of 'imagined community' has been a foundational starting point for any scholar wishing to identify the cultural mechanisms in the creation of nations.²⁰ He argues that the nations are bound by an idea of comradeship and yet, the impossibility of actual interaction between all of the individuals within its borders mean that communal relationship must, necessarily be 'imagined' in the mind of each individual.²¹ A key mechanism by which this imagining is strengthened and shaped in the modern age, he argues, is through print as a mass media.²² Michael Billig has since built upon Anderson's thesis in order to interrogate the insipid ways in which nationalism alters personal identity and introduced the idea of 'banal nationalism'. He argues that 'as far as nationality is concerned, one needs to look for the reasons why people in the contemporary world do not forget their nationality'.²³ He posits that the reason individuals do not forget, or begin to disassociate from, their nationality is because of the way it is 'flagged' on a daily basis. He deploys the example of the 'unwaved flag' at a petrol station that creates a visual reminder of the nationhood invested in its symbolism. He states that 'National identity embraces all these forgotten reminders. Consequently, an identity is to be found in the 'embodied habits of social life'.²⁴ Billig's thesis is concerned with the structures by which national identity is reinforced in established western nation states. It is not concerned with the processes of

²⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (3rd edn, London: New York, 2006).

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

²² *Ibid.* Although presumably he would also accept an extension of the thesis to include other mass media technologies.

²³ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995), p. 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

so called 'hot' nationalism where the territory or ethnic inclusion of the nation is still contested and where there is a distinct rupture to the processes of everyday life.²⁵ Nevertheless, whilst the period of Irish history under discussion here may be termed one of 'hot' nationalism, Billig's attention to the subtleties and diffuse nature of this 'flagging' of identity have proven a useful way of thinking about the communicative properties of the ephemera under discussion. The ephemera discussed allow an insight into the ways 'national identity is produced, reproduced and contested in the taken-for-granted details of social interaction, the habits and routines of everyday life'.²⁶ Rather than focusing on the symbols of flags and anthems that form the basis of many academic interrogations of the ephemeral symbols of nationhood this research considers the handbills, postcards and shrapnel that constitute the means by which nationalists created the narratives that helped to create the basis of identification with more explicit national symbols such as the tri-colour flag.²⁷

An exploration of advanced nationalist performance whether that be in the form of a political funeral, an armed insurrection, commemorative marches, or more localised protests, forms a central focus of this thesis.

However, this thesis also considers the ways in which ephemera was used in the post-Rising period to 'flag' the nation in more 'mundane modes of everyday practise'.²⁸ Furthermore, it follows the life cycle of these pieces

²⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

²⁶ Umut Özkirimli, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 191.

²⁷ Peter Alter, 'Symbols of Irish Nationalism', in Alan O'Day (ed.), *Reactions to Irish Nationalism, 1865-1914* (London, 1987), pp. 1-21.

²⁸ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitch and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: London, 2007), p. 15.

of ephemera to show how individuals created a more unique relationship with these objects and the various facets of nationalist politics they articulated to reflect a more personalised identification with this imagining of national identity. Integral to these discussions are the intersection of three key areas: performance, space and the body.

Performance

Increasingly, 'Irish culture' and 'Irishness' have been acknowledged as 'highly performative'.²⁹ Scholars have looked at traditional practises and rituals to elucidate this point. In the course of such studies it has been noted that Ireland's performative culture is based in gesture and embodied participatory traditions. Another area that has provided particularly fertile ground in which to explore the performative nature of Irish identity are the murals, parades, and commemorations in Northern Ireland. For an understanding of what is meant by performative and embodied identities, and the spaces and rituals through which they are constituted, we must first understand that social performativity and theatrical performance are not one and the same. A central facet of theatrical performance is that it is aware of itself as such and it operates within the mutually agreed upon boundaries and conventions of actors, stage, audience and so forth.³⁰ This thesis concerns itself with social performativity, which, whilst the examples presented are often referred to as performances, are distinct from theatrical

²⁹ Fintan Walsh and Sara Brady, 'Introduction: Performance Studies and Irish Culture' in Fintan Walsh and Sara Brady (ed.), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 1-11.

³⁰ Michael Mangan, *Staging Masculinities: History, Gender, Performance* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 22.

performance. Even in chapter one where the theatres are directly addressed it is the behaviour and exchange between the actors and their audience that forms the focus of discussion and not the content and performance styles of the plays themselves.

It is impossible to discuss performativity without mentioning Judith Butler, who offered up the framework of the performative as a tool to explore the ways in which subjectivity operates. *Gender Trouble* looked to the ways in which the gendered roles of masculine and feminine were in fact social constructs rather than innate or natural roles inextricably bound to the assigned biological sex of the individual. She further argued that gender should be understood as a performance wherein an individual utilised such things as clothing, gesture, speech and movement to make their individual interpretation of their gender, or gender identity, intelligible to those around them.³¹ Moreover, Butler persuasively reasoned that gender operated as a non-binary spectrum that was not dependent upon the assigned sex of the individual.³² Consequently, performativity discourse inherently recognises the centrality of both gender and the body. However, Butler's arguments have a reach that extends far beyond feminism and queer theory. She wrote that 'acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and

³¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: London, 1990).

³² Butler clarified her argument about the relationship between gender performance and the body in Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: London, 1993).

sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means'.³³ When performance is discussed in the course of this thesis it is with Butler's explanation of the 'performative' in mind. The arguments made throughout the thesis rely on an understanding of performance as something that underpins all social interactions. In essence, every gesture, speech act, the choices about the objects we surround ourselves with and clothes we wear, and how we occupy spaces contribute towards a performance that allow another individual to appropriately interpret our interaction with the society around us.³⁴ In short, the manifold means by which we make our private and individual selves legible to the world around us and thus, our ability to engage in social interaction, is defined in this research as an identity performance. Moreover, it is acknowledged that this understanding of individual identity performance can be extrapolated to the actions of collective individuals, for our purposes the advanced nationalist community, to form the performance of a group identity. In such cases I have referred to the performance of political identity. Butler's foundational framework has subsequently become the bedrock upon which scholars are able to talk about 'expressive identities' that are in themselves 'an embodied identity that expresses itself through a performing body'.³⁵ Put simply, the identity of the individual is embodied in so far as the person is corporeally manifest but the body must perform, through gesture, speech, or other signs within spaces where another individual or entity may read that expression and

³³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 136.

³⁴ Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Performativity and Performance' in Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (eds), *Performativity and Performance* (New York: London, 1995), pp. 1-18.

³⁵ Keith Hethrington, *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics* (London, 1998), p. 141.

thus legitimise and actualise that identity. In the context of this thesis, it is this understanding that underpins discussions of how the expressive identity of advanced nationalism was communicated and actualised, and how, in the case of the Rising, it occasionally failed to 'perform' intelligibly. One further feature of understandings of identity as a performative act, especially for Butler, is that it requires an audience. Each individual is simultaneously both a performer and a spectator of the performances of those around them. Consequently, whilst individuals make use of signs, such as gestures or speech acts to make their performance legible, it is only when the performances are correctly interpreted, or read, that they gain validity. As Elin Diamond states, 'To study performance is not to focus on completed forms, but to become aware of performance as itself a contested space, where meanings and desires are generated, occluded, and of course multiply interpreted'.³⁶ Such an understanding of the relationship between the performer and the audience is crucial to this thesis as it allows space for the interrogation of the relationship between advanced nationalists and the broader community in which they performed.³⁷ For example, this thesis interprets the Easter Rising as a performance and reinstates agency to non-combatant observers by showing how their inability to interpret the signs of the performers rendered it an invalid action rather than a popular expression of a claim for independent sovereignty.

³⁶ Elin Diamond, 'Introduction' in Elin Diamond (ed.), *Performance and Cultural Politics* (Oxford, 1996), p. 4.

³⁷ For an excellent overview of the relationship between performing bodies, space and political action see Markus Hallensleben, 'Introduction: Performative Body Spaces' in Markus Hallensleben (ed.), *Performative Body Spaces: Corporeal Topographies in Literature, Theatre, Dance and the Visual Arts* (Amsterdam: New York, 2010), pp. 1-27.

Space

As this study is focused on Dublin it is necessary to briefly chart the terrain of scholarship dedicated to a historical understanding of the city before exploring the more theoretical ways in which spaces can be usefully conceptualised. David Dickson pointed out as recently as 2010 that there are serious omissions in the field of Irish historiography as regards studies of Dublin.³⁸ Mary Daly's *Dublin: The Deposed Capital* remains the most authoritative social and economic history of the city at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁹ Joseph O'Brien's earlier monograph *Dear, Dirty Dublin* remains a classic study of the socio-cultural experience of those living in Ireland's capital at the *fin de siècle*.⁴⁰ Mary Daly notes that an 'exception' to the relative silence on the history of Dublin is the 'outburst of interest focused on the 1913 lock-out and the 1916 [R]ising'.⁴¹ Of these studies Padraig Yeates' recent interventions rank foremost for their nuanced integration of the way the city's inhabitants articulated their experiences of the social and political effects of the 1913 lockout and the First World War.⁴² Additionally, Andrew Kincaid and Yvonne Whelan have both produced studies that interrogate Dublin's relationship with the inheritance of colonial architecture and debates about national identity in post-

³⁸ David Dickson, 'The State of Ireland's History', *Eire Ireland*, 45:1&2 (2010), pp. 198-212.

³⁹ Mary E. Daly, *Dublin, The Deposed Capital; A Social and Economic History, 1860-1914* (Cork, 1984) Although, it should be noted that whilst Daly's monograph stands out there are a number of other studies that consider various elements of the cities architectural development and social history see Gary A. Boyd, *Dublin, 1745-1922: Hospitals, Spectacle & Vice* (Dublin, 2005); Ruth McManus, *Dublin, 1910-1940: Shaping the City and Suburbs* (Dublin, 2002); Joseph Brady & Annagret Simms (eds), *Dublin Through Space and Time* (Dublin, 2001).

⁴⁰ Joseph V. O'Brien, *"Dear, Dirty Dublin"; A City in Distress, 1899-1916* (Berkeley: Los Angeles: London, 1984).

⁴¹ Daly, *Dublin, The Deposed Capital*, p. 1.

⁴² Padraig Yeates, *Lockout: Dublin, 1913* (Basingstoke, 2000) and Padraig Yeates, *A City in Wartime; Dublin, 1914-18* (Dublin, 2011).

independence Ireland.⁴³ And finally, literary scholars of James Joyce have devoted a great deal of energy to assessing the author's modernist interpretation of Ireland's capital. And, not insignificantly, a number of influential narratives such as *Strumpet City*, *A Star Called Henry*, and *At Swim, Two Boys* also point explicitly to the integral role of the city in constructing links between space, place, identity and nationalism during the period under discussion.⁴⁴

Space has also been used as a conceptual framework, to great effect in two other key areas of enquiry in Irish studies. The first is in relationship to remembrance and identity, whereupon monuments are considered as focal points on the landscape to give direction and meaning to acts of collective memory.⁴⁵ Secondly, the role of space in the performance of identity by political communities in Northern Ireland has been investigated through ethnographic studies considering the parades and commemorations of both loyalist and nationalist communities in the territorial mapping of the six counties of Northern Ireland.⁴⁶ This thesis does not intend to fill the historiographical gulf highlighted by Dickson. Rather, it seeks to bring these developing theoretical conceptions of space

⁴³ Andrew Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin: Imperial Legacies and the Built Environment* (Minneapolis, 2006) and Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin, 2003). See also, M. Maguire, 'The Space of the Nation: History, Culture and a Conflict in Modern Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, 6:2 (1998), pp. 109-121.

⁴⁴ James Plunkett, *Strumpet City* (London, 1969); Roddy Doyle, *A Star Called Henry* (London, 2000) and Jaimie O'Neill, *At Swim, Two Boys* (Sydney, 2001).

⁴⁵ See Nuala C. Johnson, *Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance* (Cambridge, 2003).

⁴⁶ Liam Harte and Yvonne Whelan (eds), *Ireland Beyond Boundaries: Mapping Irish Studies in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Dublin, 2007). See also, Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Beckett and David Alderson (eds), *Ireland in Proximity: History, Gender, Space* (London: New York, 1999) that contains essays on a range of case studies related to Irish identity in diaspora communities, Northern Ireland and the modern Republic of Ireland.

and community identity to bear on considerations of Dublin's cultural-political landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In so doing, it recognises that spaces formed within Dublin were integral to the performances and communication of the identities of its inhabitants.

Space, claims Andrew Thacker, often 'indicates a sense of movement, of history, of becoming, while *place* is often thought to imply a static sense of location, of being, or of dwelling'.⁴⁷ However, he then goes on to argue for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between space and place that bears a closer resemblance to how these two concepts would have been understood by those living at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴⁸ Much of the theoretical underpinning of this thesis is indebted to Walter Benjamin's understanding of the metropolis as the 'frame or theatre for activity'.⁴⁹ Like him I have sought to interrogate the way in which the political experiences of the individual and the collective played out in the urban setting of Dublin at the turn of the twentieth century. Benjamin's work concerns the experiential nature of the metropolis. The nature of Ireland's colonial relationship with Britain means that the centre of administrative power that the Metropolis represents was not located in Dublin but rather, in London. However, as this thesis will demonstrate through a consideration of the theatres and the language used to describe the devastation in the wake of the Rising, Dubliners related to their city, if not as a metropolis, then

⁴⁷ Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester, 2003), p. 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 6. See also Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century' in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin; Cambridge: London, 2002), pp. 14-27 and Vittoria DiPalma, Diana Periton and Marina Lathouri (eds) *Intimate Metropolis: Urban Subjects in the Modern City* (Oxford, 2009).

certainly as an urban capital that rivalled London in its cosmopolitanism and entertainments. The colonial relationship does however, raise the point made by Edward Said and others that colonialism and imperialism are inherently about space.⁵⁰ As Fran Tonkiss points out, 'to think about politics and power is nearly always to invoke a set of spatial relations'.⁵¹ This thesis therefore interrogates the ways in which advanced nationalists sought to utilise space in their demonstrations, commemorations, and funerals to create challenges to the authority of colonial rule. In doing so it is informed by Elizabeth Grosz's assertion that 'the city is a significant context and frame for the body' and builds upon Tonkiss' assertion that 'urban spaces... provide sites for political action and are themselves politicized in contests over access, control and representation'.⁵² In so doing, this thesis demonstrates how advanced nationalists were constantly competing for space not only against the colonial power, but also against other groups who sought to use the cityscape for the purposes of political and identity performance.

Just as every action must by necessity have a spatial grounding, so too every actor has a physical presence, the body. If location and corporeal existence form the two most *a priori* components of existence then it is necessary to consider the relationship between the two. Henri Lefebvre claims that

The whole of (social) space proceeds from the body... The genesis of a far-away order can be accounted for only on the basis of the order

⁵⁰ Edward Said, *Culture & Imperialism* (London, 1994).

⁵¹ Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory: Social Relations and Urban Forms* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 59.

⁵² Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London: New York, 1995), p. 104 and Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory*, p. 59.

that is nearest to us – namely, the order of the body. Within the body itself, spatially considered, the successive levels constituted by the senses... prefigure the layers of social space and their interconnections. The passive body (the senses) and the active body (labour) converge in space.⁵³

This thesis works from the assumption that there is an intrinsic relationship between the body and the spaces in which it operates. Moreover, it recognizes the body 'as a vehicle for understanding the relationships between people and place'.⁵⁴ The body's capacity to act as a vehicle through which to convey meaning is explored, in particular, through the two funerals discussed in this thesis. In each example, the material body of the deceased and its relationship to the space around it is used to convey meaning between the participants and spectators of the ritual.

For Foucault, an analysis of space allows us to see the moments in which discourses change in relation to power. This thesis however, does not focus its analysis on institutions where power typically resides and where such discourses are often fought out, although, chapter four does acknowledge and briefly explore the power inherent in the spaces of the prison as it relates to the bio-politics of hunger striking.⁵⁵ Instead, it seeks to ascertain the way identities relate to narrative discourses of colonial power in the public spaces. Specific focus is given to how the streets and theatres of Dublin were negotiated through public spectacles and the circulation of ephemera. As such, the arguments presented in this thesis have been

⁵³ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith; Oxford, 1991), p. 405.

⁵⁴ Jon Binnie, Robyn Longhurst and Robin Peace, 'Upstairs/ Downstairs – Place Matters, Bodies Matter' in David Bell, Jon Binnie, Ruth Holliday, Robyn Longhurst and Robin Peace (eds), *Pleasure Zones: Bodies, Cities, Spaces* (New York, 2001), p. viii.

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, 'Space, Knowledge, and Power' in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (London, 1991), pp. 239-257.

informed by De Certeau's investigations into the way space facilitates a resistance to power in more 'everyday' settings. As this thesis will demonstrate, while grand public spectacles such as the Easter Rising were explicit in their use of space to challenge the power of the state and assert an alternative model of Irish identity, the whistling of ballads, the distribution of handbills, and the modification and display of such items by individuals also made direct statements about power and identity within the spaces of the capital.⁵⁶

The Body

In different ways, theories of the body buttress the discussions of the confusion experienced during the Easter Rising, and funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and Thomas Ashe, presented in this thesis.⁵⁷

In the first instance, this underpinning is inextricably bound to the way the body is constituted within Irish nationalism and the imaginative conceptions of the Irish nation itself. Ireland is symbolically configured as a female body, Erin.⁵⁸ She is simultaneously a figure of 'beautiful magnificence to be adorned by her children and the mother that weeps for the loss of her saintly sons; mistress and servant to fallen heroes'.⁵⁹ Within the discourse of

⁵⁶ Michel DeCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Trans. by Steven F. Rendall; Berkely: Los Angeles: London, 1988).

⁵⁷ The confusion experienced during the Rising is a feature that is noted by many scholars writing about the event. It is addressed directly in Wills, *Dublin 1916*; McGarry, *The Rising* and James Moran, *Staging the Rising; 1916 as Theatre* (Cork, 2005).

⁵⁸ This phenomenon is not unique to Ireland and has been explored in numerous studies. See Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London, 1997); Patricia Albanese, *Mothers of the Nation: Families and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Toronto, 2006) and Ryan and Ward (eds), *Irish Women and Nationalism*.

⁵⁹ Alan Finlayson, 'Sexuality and Nationality: Gendered Discourses of Ireland' in Terrell Carver and Véronique Mottier (eds), *Politics of Sexuality: Identity, Gender, Citizenship* (London: New York, 1998), p. 93.

Erin as a suffering mother who demands that her sons martyr themselves to defend her purity 'the demand for independence and modern statehood emerges from manhood' whilst the 'pre-modern mythology of ancient Ireland... is contained within the sphere of womanhood'.⁶⁰ This symbolic construction was ill equipped to facilitate the involvement of women who sought to participate in efforts to emancipate Ireland from colonial rule by force.⁶¹ Whilst Ireland was conceptualised as a woman the body politic was imagined as male. Moreover, the masculinity of sacrifice in service of the nation that was a requisite to Ireland's realisation of nationhood becomes a process of identifying the 'other'.⁶² Thus, Gattens argues, the foundational anxiety around women's bodies and gender inherent in the discourse of the modern body politic lead to the exertion of social, political and material control over women's bodies.⁶³

Both Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and Thomas Ashe were eulogised within this framework of masculine sacrifice in service of a feminine gendered nation that had experienced corporeal violence by a masculine

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 95. See also, Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922* (Illinois, 2011), pp. 94-187.

⁶¹ This is a feature that has been explored both in the context of Ireland and other colonised territories. See, Brenda Gray and Louise Ryan, 'The Politics of Irish Identity and the Interconnections Between Feminism, Nationalism and Colonialism' in Ruth Roach (ed.), *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race* (Bloomington: Indianapolis, 1998), pp. 121-139; Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class and Citizenship* (Ithaca: London, 2006), pp. 168-193 and Sikata Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence, and Empire in India and Ireland* (New York: London, 2012).

⁶² The relationship between masculinity and the modern western nation state is topic that has been considered at length. See, John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Philadelphia, 2002); Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Chichester, 2010), pp. 171-200 and Kenneth R. Dutton, *The Perfectible Body: The Western Ideal of Physical Development* (London, 1995), pp. 199-229.

⁶³ Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London: New York, 1996), pp. 21-26. Éibhear Walshe argues that the need to define the nation in terms of its 'others' also causes the anxiety and regulation of homosexual behaviour. See Éibhear Walshe, 'Introduction: Sex, Nation and Dissent' in Éibhear Walshe (ed.), *Sex, Nation and Dissent in Irish Writing* (Cork, 1997), pp. 1-16.

colonial centre.⁶⁴ Reciprocally, violence towards the Irish nation was narrated through these individuals' own corporeal sufferings whilst under the control of the British penal system.⁶⁵ Furthermore, in accepting that the material bodies of O'Donovan Rossa and Ashe were vehicles through which to represent an idealised masculinity within the symbolic body politic, this thesis demonstrates how women spoke through the bodies of these men to assert claims for representation within the advanced nationalist community and the nationhood it claimed to represent. In order to achieve this latter task the relationship between the corpse and the living individuals is interrogated. In so doing it is necessary to understand that the corpse of both O'Donovan Rossa and Ashe were, on the one hand, material objects whilst, on the other, were symbolic of both the political body of the advanced nationalist community and the gendered body of the ideal male martyr.⁶⁶ The funerals of O'Donovan Rossa and Ashe are analysed in this thesis as performances where the body is not only a focus for ritual action, but also increases the success of the political performance of advanced nationalism because of the emotional effect of the corpses presence on the audience. To fully understand the role played by the body of the corpse and the bodies of the advanced nationalists and spectators in these funerals it is crucial to understand the relationship between ritual, space, performance.

⁶⁴ See, Diarmuid Ó Donnobáin *Rosa Souvenir of Public Funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery*, CD 316/2. Contemporary Documents Collection, Bureau of Military History and *Lament for Thomas Ashe* by Sean Ó Cathasaigh in Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637, National Library of Ireland.

⁶⁵ See *Ibid.*, and also, David Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Irish Modernity, 1800-2000: The Transformation of Oral Space* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 135-140 and Thomas Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life* (Intro. by P. S. O'Hegarty; Cork, 1922).

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the role of the corpse as a material object see Joanna R. Sofaer, *The Body as Material Culture: A Theoretical Osteoarcheology* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 62-68.

As such, discussions of the body are inextricably bound to the discussions of space and performance in the arguments presented in this thesis.

Historical Fragments: Ephemera and Memory

An extensive array of primary materials is used in this thesis including archival collections of political ephemera. These ephemera are rarely, if ever, considered noteworthy despite their presence in various archives. This thesis shows that these items offer a unique insight into the ways individuals mediated their personal reactions to, and identification with, the growth of advanced nationalism in Ireland during the period under discussion. The analysis of these items of ephemera is supported by an archival backbone made up of more traditional sources. For example, significant use has been made of the witness statements of the Bureau of Military History, alongside other memoirs and first hand accounts of the period. These are complemented by printed sources, such as nationalist journals and newspapers, and state papers from the Chief Secretary of Ireland Office and police reports.

Extensive use has been made of the Bureau of Military History Witness Statements and Contemporary Documents Collection in this research.⁶⁷ The statements, which became available to researchers in 2003, represent an unrivalled attempt to collate the first hand experiences of individuals who lived through the struggle for Irish independence. Their comparatively recent release into the public domain has meant that in the

⁶⁷ The use of the Contemporary Documents are discussed in greater detail, along with other ephemera, at a later point.

period between the undertaking of this research and its completion scholars have made extensive use of the BMHWS and many have written about the formation and scope of the Bureau.⁶⁸ Furthermore, in the last year the statements have been made available online in a fully searchable format.⁶⁹ Consequently, it is now easier than ever to exploit the capacity of the statements to corroborate or refute one another. However, the recent monographs that have made use of the statements do not intrude upon the specific conclusions presented in this thesis. The extensive use of the statements is guided by more than just their availability. They are the fullest sets of accounts available about the experiences of those who took part in the fight for independence. Whilst the collection does contain statements by individuals who later achieved political prominence ordinary individuals who have not left other memoirs or records of their experiences gave many of the statements. Before turning our attentions to the specific challenges raised by using witness testimonies it is first necessary to provide a preface that considers the formation, methods, and personnel of the Bureau of Military History.

The statements were compiled under a Fianna Fáil government initiative between 1947-1957 that aimed to record the experiences of individuals involved in national activities from 1913 until 1921. The intention was to produce an authoritative account of events between the formation of the Irish Volunteers up to Irish independence from the British state. The project was initially staffed and directed by four professional

⁶⁸ See Diarmaid Ferriter, “‘In such Deadly Earnest’ The Bureau of Military History opens its doors’, *The Dublin Review*, 12 (2003), pp. 36-65 and Gerard O’Brein, *Irish Governments and the Guardianship of Historical Records, 1922-1972* (Dublin, 2004).

⁶⁹ <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/>.

historians, and military personnel. By 1954 Michael McDunphy, the Director of the Bureau of Military history (BMH) reported that 'the investigation staff now consists of five army officers and nine civilians, one of whom – Colonel Conway – is an ex-officer in the army'.⁷⁰ 1,773 statements were collected including those from figures who had gained prominent political positions in the government following independence. A conspicuous omission from the collection is a statement by Eamon deValera, the Taoiseach who instigated the Bureau. Despite numerous requests he refused to provide an account of his recollections.

The director of the Bureau stated in a report of 1952 that 'the aim of the Bureau in all... cases is to get their complete stories on record once they commence'.⁷¹ This was a somewhat contentious aim and others, such as Dr Richard Hayes, argued that contributors should only provide information on events in which they were directly involved. For example, if they were active in the Easter Rising but played no part in the Howth gun running, then their recollections on the latter should not be recorded. Whilst Hayes' viewpoint stands to reason many of the statements appear to use events they were not directly involved in as a way of situating their own actions within the timeframe of the independence struggle, making it difficult to delineate witnesses narratives in the way he had envisaged. The criteria for selecting witnesses appears to have privileged those who had held rank within (in order) the Irish Volunteers, IRB, Hibernian Rifles, Irish Citizen Army and

⁷⁰ LA22/333 (105), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, University College Dublin Archives. Gerard O'Brein points out however that following the removal of Florence O'Donaghue from the project McDunphy was thorough in gaining control of the Bureau. He only allowed army officers to perform fieldwork and successfully minimised the role of the historians or 'civilians' in O'Brein, *Irish Governments*, pp. 139-140.

⁷¹ LA22/333 (57), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

Cumann na mBan.⁷² However, the Bureau does not appear to have excluded others from making contributions, a fact that is represented by the scope of the final collection of statements and documents. Whilst the statements are narrative in their structure some formulaic patterns are visible. In statements that deal specifically with the Easter Rising these patterns are particularly noticeable. Numerous witnesses begin their statements with a brief outline on their upbringing and how it was that they first became aware of nationalist politics. Many go on to state how, and in which year, they joined groups such as the Gaelic League or the Irish Volunteers. A significant majority of the statements also give detailed accounts of the Easter Rising and the events directly leading up to it such as the Howth gun running. These patterns are in all likelihood due to the fact that participants were sent a long and thorough questionnaire of open questions to guide them in the construction of their narratives.⁷³ Not every witness was visited by a member of the Bureau, however, the director was clear that '[i]n order that there may be no suggestion of exclusion of any person from direct contact with the Bureau, I proposed to write individually to every person selected as a witness and to send him, or her, a copy of the questionnaire'.⁷⁴ For the most part the statements then go on to answer the detailed questions laid out by the BMH about the intricacies of their involvement in the Rising. There are few details given about the witnesses' experiences of internment and information about the War of Independence is sparse compared to the more uniform statements concerning the Easter Rising. On

⁷² LA22/334 (26), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

⁷³ LA22/335 (9-37), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

⁷⁴ LA22/335 (4), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

occasion, this has the effect of making the statements appear to come to a rather abrupt end, echoing the narrow focus of the questionnaire that did not seek details of events after the surrender was taken in April, 1916. The questionnaire issued by the Bureau was explicitly intended to assist in the construction of the fullest and most complete account of the Easter Rising and is meticulous in its coverage of military history. There is a whole section, comprising of no less than eleven questions, on flags alone.⁷⁵ Conversely the sections on looting and internment are each comprised of only two questions. This suggests that questions that would satiate both academic and state concerns to establish a verifiable and consistent narrative were favoured over more open questions that would elicit more varied responses. Despite the fact that the Bureau did not seek to directly address topics such as looting a significant proportion of the witnesses addressed it nonetheless, a fact that highlights their importance and the prominent role such issues played in their experience of the event. In the course of this research the BMHWS have been used alongside diaries, letters and memoirs to extrapolate conclusions about the personal experiences of events leading to Irish independence.

The release of the BMHWS in 2003 was greeted with a great deal of excitement from the academic community and subsequent works on the period of Irish Independence have made extensive use of the statements. However, the use of the statements is not without methodological challenges and, more recently, caution is being increasingly advised lest the accessibility and scope of the BMHWS should overshadow the importance of

⁷⁵ These questions were added on as an addendum to the original questionnaire.

other archival collections. The two most salient challenges presented by the BMH for the purposes of this research are that, firstly, the statements are not, in the strictest sense a traditional primary source. Whilst they provide an unrivalled representation of individual relationships within the events leading up to Irish independence, they were not constructed contemporaneously with the events they describe. They are memories, mediated by the passage of time, and by their transcription to a written format. And secondly, the BMH represents a state archive, created by individuals who played an active part in the events it attempts to so rigorously chronicle.

The Civil War was not considered within the scope of the Bureau's endeavours and, whilst some witnesses did provide details of their experiences during this period, for many it was entirely omitted from their testimonies. This highlights not only a limitation of the narratives provided in the statements but also the fact that the Civil War remained a highly sensitive issue at the time the Bureau was in operation. The Civil War looms large over any methodological consideration about the usage of the statements. Records show, for example, that the examination of the witnesses' statements 'to ensure that, as far as possible, they represent, in clear terms, everything which is within the knowledge of the witnesses concerned' was undertaken by Lieut. – Colonel MacCarthy.⁷⁶ In fact, whilst the Bureau was clear that they would not exclude important witnesses on the basis of their later political affiliation, a list was compiled of surviving company members of the Irish Volunteers that noted their affiliation during

⁷⁶ LA22/333 (50), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

the Civil War.⁷⁷ That the Bureau was aware that the turbulent and divisive nature of the Civil War had the possibility to affect the statements individuals made about their involvement in the period that directly preceded it. Additionally, a number of potential witnesses who took the republican side during the Civil war refused to provide statements because they either distrusted the Bureau or still refused to recognise the legitimacy of the state. Mrs Pauline Keating recalled in her witness statement an exchange that took place at a reunion of Cumann na mBan members that demonstrates the suspicion some veterans had towards the Bureau. She said,

[t]hey were discussing the work being done by the Bureau and many of them surprised me by their attitude towards it. They seemed to think that the enquiries being made by the Bureau were stimulated by mere curiosity and some of them would rather burn anything they had than give it to the Bureau. Six or seven of them were arguing in that sense and I could not understand their point of view. I suggested that the information might be of use to future generations, but I did not succeed in convincing them.⁷⁸

A consequence of the reluctance of some individuals to provide statements because of their political affiliations during the Civil War means that the BMHWS should be used with some caution and their extensive scope should not be mistaken for an exhaustive record of all those who participated in the independence movement. In addition to accepting that events subsequent to the War of Independence clouded the work of the Bureau it is also important to consider the time that lapsed between the recording of the statements and the experiences they record. Louise Gavin

⁷⁷ This information is given as an annotation in the catalogue of the Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards. See LA22/ 334, Robert Dudley Edwards Collection, UCDA.

⁷⁸ Mrs Pauline Keating, WS/432, National Archives of Ireland, p. 3. Also, O'Brein, *Irish Governments*, p. 142.

Duffy's statement provides a succinct illustration of the problematic role played by memory in the BMHWS. It is littered with the constant preface 'I think' suggesting that her memory was not all together clear about the events of Easter Week, 1916. An especially clear example of this relates to her description of Easter Monday and her first journey into the city centre after receiving the news that a Rising had broken out. 'I was not hindered in any way on my journey. I saw nothing unusual, except, I suppose, empty streets or crowded streets, I do not remember – empty more likely'.⁷⁹

The methodological challenge that memories present to the historian are not unique to BMHWS. They are trials common to all researchers who seek to use oral narratives and memoirs as a basis for interrogating individual agency within historical moments. However, as a collective archival body the BMH represent an intersection of three particular concerns. Firstly, one must consider the historiographical challenge of using sources which, due to their very nature, are likely to contain inconsistencies due to memory loss or the restructuring of a narrative in the years which passed between an event and its recording; a memory loss that can also be compounded by the multiple retelling of the narrative. Secondly, the way in which the statements intersect with state-led initiatives to create and consolidate a nation-state in the years following the civil war must be taken into account. Finally, and most significantly, any use of the BMHWS must appreciate the relationship between individual and collective memory in both the forging of national identity and the construction of the narratives contained within the statements. Succinctly put, in order to fully interrogate

⁷⁹ Louise Gavin Duffy, WS/216, NAI, p. 5.

the sources within the BMH one must first consider the relationship between individual and collective memory and the role of memory in the construction of the Nation.

All memories are individual because ultimately only individuals have the capacity to remember.⁸⁰ However, in order that these intimate recollections may be legible to another and acquire significance they require an organisational principle behind them.⁸¹ This organisational principle is collective memory. Collective memory is a reassembly of multiple individual memories and it is therefore necessary to acknowledge that individuals are prone to forgetfulness and are equally likely to embellish, omit, or change the emphasis of their memories over time.⁸² Often this is a direct result of an engagement with collective memory as individuals who, during the events they would later describe, may not have been aware of the significance of their actions were able, through the retelling of their memories to others, find greater significance in their actions. A particularly salient example of this is the vexed question of who was last to evacuate the General Post Office during the final hours of the Easter Rising, a subject that a number of the witness statements address.⁸³ In the context of individual memory, a flash of somebody in a doorway during a heated and life-threatening sprint for safety may not have registered as particularly significant. However, individuals were pushed to resurrect this faint recollection, as it was a

⁸⁰ Jan Werner Muller, 'Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power Over Memory' in Jan Werner Muller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Present of the Past* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 20.

⁸¹ Michael G. Kenny, 'A Place for Memory: The Interface Between Individual and Collective History', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41:3 (1999), p. 421.

⁸² John R. Gillis, 'Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship' in John R. Gillis (ed.) *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (New Jersey, 1994), p. 3.

⁸³ Seamus Ua Caomhanaigh, WS/889, NLI, pp. 56-58.

question of great importance in the construction of a collective memory of the Rising. In any event somebody had to be the last to vacate the burning GPO but in the retelling of the event many witnesses imply that those who stayed on longest had the greatest commitment to the cause of Irish freedom and are rarefied as men willing to risk everything for the safety of their comrades in arms.⁸⁴ The recollections of those who lived through historical events can be used to mediate, correct and coerce the collective memory or narrative of an event. However, there is a reciprocal risk of conflict between private and collective memories should a situation arise whereby an individual refuses to adjust their own recollections to situate them within the framework of a collective narrative.

Regardless of how memory is coded, be it through oral tradition, the written word, or spaces, it is a foundational cornerstone of culture. Twinned with a society's capacity to remember however, is both the active and passive choice to forget.⁸⁵ It is important to recognise that people are both 'memory makers' and 'memory consumers'.⁸⁶ The witnesses providing statements to the BMH were 'first and foremost...members of the community, sharing the memory common to the community as a whole, memory which is the source of cultural identity'.⁸⁷ They provided their recollections of the past to the melting pot of the collective narrative and consumed their own memories in the context of others and the intellectual and cultural modes of their society. This amalgamation of the individual into

⁸⁴ Frank Henderson, WS/249, NLI, pp. 54-55.

⁸⁵ Krinka Viadkovic Petrov, 'Memory and Oral Tradition' in Thomas Butler (ed.), *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* (Oxford, 1989), p. 77.

⁸⁶ Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies', *History and Theory*, 41:2 (2002), p. 179.

⁸⁷ Petrov, 'Memory and Oral Tradition', p. 81.

the collective raises the obvious challenge of whose version of events is preferentially recorded? How is this done and why? In the on going and increasing attempts to represent the subaltern groups of history and represent less heterogeneous accounts of the past the concept of 'memory communities' has been a useful way of avoiding the pitfalls of accepting the potentially exclusive nature of collective memories whilst acknowledging and exploring their existence.⁸⁸ Such an approach allows the historian to interrogate, for example, the memorial legacy of Protestants living in the southern counties of Ireland during the struggle for independence despite the fact that their memories were frequently obscured by the more dominant collective memory of nationalist experiences.⁸⁹ Jan-Werner Muller defines collective memory as 'a social framework through which nationally conscious individuals can organise their history'.⁹⁰ Whilst this definition is unhelpfully limiting in its scope it does highlight the important point that discussions of collective memory are often framed in the context of the nation. The successful formation and control of a collective memory is central to the creation of a nation state.⁹¹ It assists in forming, if not a unified, then at least a dominant narrative of how the nation is imagined spatially and historically. It secures and reinforces the state's claim to represent history. And, finally, in times of political transformation a stable collective narrative of the nation's past can have a soothing effect. In

⁸⁸ Peter Burke, 'History as Social Memory' in Thomas Butler (ed.), *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind* (Oxford, 1989), p. 107.

⁸⁹ Colin Murphey and Lynne Adair, *Untold Stories: Protestants in the Republic of Ireland, 1922-2002* (Dublin, 2002).

⁹⁰ Muller, 'Introduction', p. 3.

⁹¹ Lilianne Weissburg, 'Introduction' in Lilianne Weissberg and Dan Ben-Amos (eds), *Cultural Memory and the Construction of National Identity* (Detroit, 1999), pp. 7-27.

contrast, as Knauer and Walkowitz point out political transformations can also 'serve as triggers or flashpoints for renewed struggles over the legacy of the past'.⁹² In short, collective memory is integral to the nation because of its potential to create uniformity, stability, and a shared basis of identity. Whilst there are numerous subtle ways of constructing and reinforcing collective memories, particularly in the service of the nation state, large 'public commemorative acts [that] invariably draw a part of their significance from more contemporary narratives or agendas' provide a fertile ground to excavate the relationship between the state, the individual, and collective memory.⁹³

This thesis considers commemorative practises built around the topography of Dublin to explore the ways in which advanced nationalists interacted with and moulded collective memory to articulate their understanding of Irish identity. National commemorations frequently revolve around a motif of sacrifice in service to the nation and use monuments as a focal point for communities to gather and partake in organised moments of collective remembering. Remembrance however, is a misleading phrase. Individuals who gather for commemorations are never merely reengaging with their own memories. They are, perhaps subconsciously, relating their own memories to the collective narrative of the event.⁹⁴ At their core, such commemorations ask individuals to

⁹² Lisa Maya Knauer and Daniel Walkowitz, 'Introduction' in Daniel Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer (eds), *Memory and the Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space* (Durham: London, 2004), p. 4.

⁹³ William Kidd and Brian Murdoch, 'Introduction', in William Kidd and Brian Murdoch (eds) *Memory and Memorials: The Commemorative Century* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 2.

⁹⁴ Ian McBride, 'Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland' in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 6.

subscribe to a collective ideal of what the nation is and question or confirm their own individual responsibility to that principle.

The commemorations considered in this thesis, notably the centennial commemorations of the 1798 rebellion, and the funerals of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and Thomas Ashe replicated many of the traits common to commemorative focus within nation states as outlined above.⁹⁵ However, the explicitly nationalist events operated in direct conflict to the sovereign colonial power of the British state. In exploring these events this thesis acknowledges that the collective memories that were constructed, circulated and formed during these commemorations were defining moments in the construction of a renegotiated Irish national identity. Guy Beiner has noted that 'the [1798] centenary [was] essentially an exercise of mass-politicisation and "invention of tradition" dictated from the centre to the periphery'.⁹⁶ He goes on to state however that

[p]ublic commemoration ceremonies and memorialisation through monuments are subject to reception and modification by individuals, who must be able to recognise their own pasts in the group's shared memory... private memories often conflict with imposed attempts by the elite to reshape public memory into legitimising myths that promote hegemonic values such as conformity and stability.⁹⁷

The 1798 centennial and funerals discussed in this thesis were not characterised by attempts to convey accurate narratives of historical events. Instead, competing groups chose to highlight the role of particular individuals who legitimised their contemporary politics by placing them

⁹⁵ This thesis does not focus specifically on commemorations of Robert Emmet however this topic has been addressed in Marianne Elliott, *Robert Emmet: The Making of a Legend* (London, 2003), pp. 173-208.

⁹⁶ Guy Beiner, 'Negotiations of Memory: Re-thinking 1798 commemoration', *The Irish Review*, Vol. 26 (2000), p. 60.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

within a clear teleology of Irish struggle.⁹⁸ It is useful to view each of the competing groups involved in these commemorations as forming a distinct 'memory community'. Through such an approach it is possible to assess the nuances and dynamics of not just the events themselves, but also the development of nationalism and its popular appropriation in Ireland at the turn of the twentieth century. If one takes the view that collective memory must be confined to a national consciousness the risk is that the commemorations that took place in Ireland prior to independence are interpreted as a singular hegemonic challenge to the state, or worse, they become illegitimate subjects of analysis within the discourse of collective memory because they do not originate from the expression of a recognised nation state. Once Ireland had gained recognition, as an independent nation state, maintaining control of the republican narrative of events such as the 1798 rebellion was imperative. In writing to Florence O'Donoghue about his plans to prevent the closure of the BMHWS from public view, Robert Dudley Edwards stated 'I think [Richard] Hayes is right, that the Taoiseach [Eamon deValera] takes these matters very seriously. He certainly did so about State Paper Office material on 1798'.⁹⁹ Despite the time that had lapsed since the rebellion it was still viewed as politically powerful and the control over the collective memory of the event was recognised by deValera as important to the stability of the Irish nation state in the twentieth century.

Commemoration can be communicated through text and need not be a large-scale public event. Indeed, the original impetus behind the

⁹⁸ Burke, 'History as Social Memory', p. 101 and Sophie Olivier, 'Presence and Absence of Wolfe Tone During the Centenary Commemoration of the 1798 Rebellion' in Laurence M. Geary, *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 183.

⁹⁹ LA22/333 (154), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

commissioning of the BMH was to rectify the fact that young boys leaving school in the 1930s had appeared to have little knowledge of the Rising or subsequent events leading to Irish independence.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, given this initial aim to bridge gaps in the knowledge of the youth of the country, it was decided to close the BMH from public view in 1957. As a result the work of the Bureau does not fit easily within the discourse of commemoration outlined above. The general public, many of who would have had their own living memories of the independence struggle, were not required to situate their own recollections within a framework of the Bureau's collected narratives. Nor did individuals who made contributions read other contributors' statements except in the limited number of examples where witnesses chose to share their statements prior to submission to the Bureau.¹⁰¹ If, as Wulf Kansteiner has argued, 'all memories, even the memories of eyewitnesses, only assume collective relevance when they are structured, represented, and used in a social setting' then it is difficult to view the BMHWS as an archive of collective memory prior to 2003.¹⁰² Furthermore, the on-going use and analysis of the statements contained within the BMH mean that interpretations of their content is still being fed into and shaping the collective memory. The consequence of both these statements is that the BMHWS remain important, and political documents a factor that historians should be aware of when they engage with them.

The witnesses who provided statements had been frequently called upon in the years between 1921 and 1947 to share their recollections.

¹⁰⁰ Gerard O'Brien, p. 131

¹⁰¹ LA22/334 (26), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

¹⁰² Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory', p. 190.

However, through the retelling of their stories veterans of the independence struggle became involved in a complex process of memory renegotiation. The similarities between a vast number of the statements suggests that in the intervening years between independence and the Bureau undertaking its project individual memories had become mediated and adapted to fit alongside those of other individuals which had the effect of creating a more collective narrative. This restructuring began almost immediately in camps such as Frongoch and, for those who escaped imprisonment, in Ireland. The executions provided martyrs and a new discourse for discussing the Rising. Individual recollections were almost immediately forced to mediate with these new collective memories that were forming. The witnesses who provided statements to the Bureau of Military History were individuals who lived within a distinct social and cultural environment (the Irish nation state). They were a primary repository of living memory and, as such, were memory producers, and they had also been memory consumers for upwards of twenty five years between independence and the start of the Bureau's project. It is impossible to conceive therefore that the witness statements provide insight into clear, unadulterated and accurate individual recollections of the period 1890-1921. However, whilst important to acknowledge, this becomes irrelevant if one asks different questions of the sources than the ones those who originally compiled the archive sought to ask. This current piece of research does not seek to discover the true account of what happened during the period of the Irish independence struggle. It seeks to question how individuals mediated their own identities and memories in response to collective narratives of nationalism and

republicanism. The witness statements in both their similarities with one another, their linguistic themes and patterns (such as the role of rumour) and their occasional deviation from the expected narrative frame means that, despite their apparent problems they remain one of the most important body of sources available.

Finally, it is imperative to acknowledge the role that is played by the historian in the creation of collective memory. In some respects the historian acts as a guardian of history representing balanced and scholarly representations of the past to counter the politically motivated 'myths'.¹⁰³

Like the witnesses providing testimonials the historian is a product of, rather than exempt from, the socio-cultural mores of their environment. The resurgence in memory studies is in itself a form of memorial that on the one hand historicises and theorises the foundational relationship between memory and social identity and on the other responds to the concern that in many cases the last survivors, of, for example, the First World War, and their immediate families are dying out.¹⁰⁴ This has led to an increased, and increasingly, frantic calls to commemorate, memorialise, and archive their memories and actions, a process that has led to rich and fertile ground for academic excavation whilst also acknowledging that scholars are themselves complicit in the act of memorialisation and are a product of commemorative culture. A particular example of this complex interplay between the historian and their society can be seen by looking more closely at the engagement by Sean Lemass with the process of recording the

¹⁰³ Muller, 'Introduction', p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas J. Saunders, 'Material Culture and Conflict: The Great War, 1914-2003' in Nicholas J. Saunders (ed.) *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (London: New York, 2004), p. 5.

testimonials of those involved in Ireland's independence struggle. Sean Lemass is now widely believed to have been one of the young men involved in the shootings that took place on Bloody Sunday in 1920. He would not however, be drawn into discussing the matter.¹⁰⁵ He simply stated 'Firing Squads... don't have reunions'.¹⁰⁶ Lemass did, however, provide a lengthy witness statement to the Bureau in which he omitted any reference to his role in Bloody Sunday. It would appear that Lemass used his individual autonomy as a memory producer to deprive the collective memory of details of the more gruesome and secretive aspects of the Irish War of Independence through an act of active omission. Historians, however, have through their identification of Lemass' involvement in Bloody Sunday bridged the gaps in the collective narrative. In doing so, they have challenged the politically expedient myths surrounding that turbulent period of Irish history and also produced a more detailed account for collective consumption.¹⁰⁷ In sum, whilst the BMH forms an unrivalled repository of personal testimonies about events leading to Irish independence it is vital that they are also understood as accounts relayed through the interpretive narrative frameworks and culture of collective memory that existed at the time they were compiled. Consequently, they have been used, in this research, alongside accounts written concurrently with the events they described.

In addition to the 1,773 witness statements that were collected by the BMH a vast collection of contemporary documents were also donated.

¹⁰⁵ O'Brein, *Irish Governments*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Diane F. Britton, 'Public History and Public Memory', *The Public Historian*, 19:3 (1997), p. 20.

Robert Dudley Edwards and Florence O'Donoghue exchanged numerous letters, between themselves and to the director of the National Library Dr Richard Hayes, and the director of the BMH, expressing their bitter disappointment at the decision to refuse access to these materials and the witness statements until the last contributor in receipt of a military services pension had died. The contemporary documents contain, in addition to correspondence, a wealth of ephemera relating to every facet of the Irish struggle for independence. When the Bureau was closed in 1957 it was decided that all the material it had collected would be kept in the storage vaults at Collins Barracks. Robert Dudley Edwards and Florence O'Donoghue argued that by denying access to the archive they had removed

[o]pportunities which will not recur, for checking and filling gaps have now been lost. Whatever case may be made for denying students and research workers use of eye witnesses' statements, no case whatever can be made for impounding original material, contemporary documents, which would be available if they had not been given to the bureau.¹⁰⁸

Dr Richard Hayes appeared to favour the opinion of the State in the matter but he ultimately felt that 'I think we can do nothing and I have no time to bang my head against a blank wall. Incidentally the material collected seems to me to be of so little value that I do not mourn the loss'.¹⁰⁹ Few individuals would now share Hayes' assessment of the bureau's collections. However, the ephemera contained within the BMH, and other archives, remains a source base that is almost entirely ignored by historians, it is deemed significant for the texture and anecdotal flourish it can provide but it is rare to find works that seek to critically engage with what unique insights this

¹⁰⁸ LA22/333 (149), Papers of Robert Dudley Edwards, UCDA.

¹⁰⁹ LA22/333 (145), Ibid.

material can offer.¹¹⁰ Toby Barnard's *A Guide to Sources for the History of Material Culture in Ireland, 1500-2000* omits any reference to the Bureau at all and provides no discussion at all of the role of material culture in the political transformations of the early twentieth century.¹¹¹ This fact illustrates how significantly the value of these sources is underappreciated. This thesis aims to engage critically with ephemera and relies predominantly, though not exclusively, on the Contemporary Documents Collections of the BMH and the archives of Kilmainham Gaol Museum to do so.

The problems for the historian dealing with material culture are manifold. Their undervalued status as objects of analytical worth means they often have a mercurial presence in archives that in turn took little note of the item's biography and pedigree when it first came to reside within the holdings.¹¹² When first conducting the research for this thesis I enlisted the assistance of an archivist to ascertain the presence and whereabouts of the ephemera I sought within their archive. After some initial confusion he finally understood the nature of the material I was hoping to find and said, slightly perplexed, 'so you want nationalist bric-a-brac?' before pointing me in the direction of a treasure trove of material. What this anecdote elucidates is one of the most fundamental challenges that lie in conducting

¹¹⁰ Wills, *Dublin 1916*; See also, Neil Jarman, *Material Cultures: Parades and Visual Display in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: New York, 1997) and Ray Cashman, 'Visions of Irish Nationalism', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 45:3 (2008), pp. 361-381 for examples of material culture being used to analyse political cultures in Ireland.

¹¹¹ Toby Barnard, *A Guide to Sources for the History of Material Culture in Ireland, 1500-2000* (Dublin, 2005).

¹¹² See Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hark, 'Mixed Box: The Cultural Biography of a Box of "Ethnographic Photographs"' in Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hark (eds), *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Things* (London: New York, 2004), pp. 47-62 for a discussions of the privileging of certain items over others within archives.

research of this nature. And yet, scholars who have considered material culture in the context of museums frequently point to the ‘power of the real thing’ in communicating narratives to the visiting public.¹¹³ Exhibits in museums rely upon the display of ephemera. For example, Liam Mellows’ coat hangs prominently in the room that narrates the history of the Civil War at the Collins Barracks Military Museum as part of their exhibit ‘The Irish at war at home and abroad from 1550’. The display card draws the viewer’s attention to what is now a barely visible bloodstain in a way that simultaneously fetishizes, and seeks to create an emotive reaction to his violent death. Similarly, display cases at Kilmainham Gaol contain items like Michael Collins’ scapular that is placed above a card that informs the observer that it was removed from his body after death. The emotive power of ‘the real thing’ in the context of the museum’s public displays are seen as self-evident and yet, even within these same institutions the value of these objects to historians conducting scholarly research is rarely understood.

For the most part information about the quantity of a particular piece of ephemera produced, be it a handbill, ballad sheet, poster or badge, and the geographical scope of its circulation has been lost to time. In some cases, it is highly probable that such information was never recorded as, given the seditious nature of the material, it could have been incriminating. Often times we are also left with no details pertaining to the date of the items’ production or indeed who was behind its creation and what their political allegiances were. In other instances we are more fortunate and, where such

¹¹³ Susan M. Pearce, ‘Objects as Meaning; Or, Narrating the Past’ in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London, 1994), p. 20. Also see, George W. Stocking Jnr. (ed.), *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture* (Wisconsin: London, 1985).

information exists it has been provided in the footnotes. However, where possible, the ephemera that form the subject of analysis in the arguments that follow have been historically situated by me through a careful cross-referencing of contextual information present in other sources. For example, despite exhaustive attempts I was unable to find production dates for the Powell Press postcards, which form one of the most extended points of analysis in this thesis. Despite this, the existence of two postcards depicting Thomas Ashe, one that noted his role in the Rising, and another that commemorated his death, in addition to other postcards in the set providing the dates on which individuals were executed, led me to believe that they were produced between May 1916 and August 1917, with the addendum of the second postcard of Thomas Ashe produced sometime after September 1917. These assumptions were then later verified by a police report found within the Chief Secretary of Ireland's Registered Office Papers that pertained to the arrest of a Tipperary newsagent for displaying Powell Press postcards in his window on 5 July 1916 and a prior report also relating to newsagents' displays of the same material in Dublin on 27 June 1916.¹¹⁴ These supplementary pieces of information not only date the postcards but also give an indication of their broad circulation and visibility.

Given the problems highlighted above it is reasonable to question how likely it is to draw reliable conclusions from this source base. One answer to such concerns is relatively simple to provide. The hundreds, if not thousands, of pieces of ephemera in the archives and the regularity with

¹¹⁴ 5617/11840, Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers 1916, NAI and 5621/13987, *Ibid.*

which identical examples appear is an indication of, on the one hand their prominent existence in the period under consideration, and also the value imbued to them by their owners. Whilst this thesis provides illustrative examples each one is a piece of ephemera for which numerous identical copies have been sourced during the research stages of this project.

Secondly, the methodology deployed to analyse the ephemera and reach the conclusions presented in this thesis is indebted to the theories of material culture. Studies of material culture are grounded in the pioneering work of Arjun Appadurai whose introduction to *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* argued that ‘commodities, like persons, have social lives’.¹¹⁵ Material objects are, by their nature, different from texts and images. They can be experienced as multi-sensory and as such have a relationship to each sense with the possible exception of taste. It is precisely the sensuality of material objects that provide ‘subtle connections with cultural lives’ in ways that text alone cannot.¹¹⁶ The scholar wishing to use material culture as a source base in their research must never lose sight of the sensual and material qualities of the items they analyse.¹¹⁷ However, these experiences are necessarily lost in the translation of research onto a page and so the images contained within this thesis give an impression of the ephemera discussed but should not be viewed as equivalent to contact with the item. The importance of material culture to lived experience is far

¹¹⁵ Arjun Appadurai, ‘Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value’, in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Daniel Miller, ‘Why Some Things Matter’ in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (London, 1998), p. 9.

¹¹⁷ Christopher Tilley, ‘Introduction’ in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susan Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (eds), *Handbook of Material Culture* (London, 2006), p. 2.

from peripheral. As Joanna Soafer states 'without material expression social relations have little substantive reality, as there is nothing through which these relations can be mediated'.¹¹⁸ This is not to say that every piece of material item is useful or a worthwhile focus of analysis. The dual concepts of the biographical object and the protocol object are a useful way of distinguishing between objects that illuminate the past and material that forms little more than historical detritus. The protocol object is one that is merely acquired and co-exists alongside its owner, whereas the biographical object is 'part of the narrative of self-definition'.¹¹⁹ Soafer therefore claims that material culture is intrinsic to an understanding of social relations whilst Hoskins highlights that, in some instances, objects are integral to a process of self-definition. Soafer and Hoskins are not alone in their assertions and indeed a central tenant of Material Culture studies is that objects have the capacity to 'negotiate the inner self with the outside world'.¹²⁰ Moreover, 'how people relate to the world through things' sheds light on 'the process of individual identity formation'.¹²¹ Neil Jarman has applied an understanding of objects as items that have an ability to communicate identity and mediate social relations to his studies of the nationalist and loyalist communities of Northern Ireland. In so doing he has been able to demonstrate the 'negotiations between different groups competing for the privilege of determining collective identity and the

¹¹⁸ Joanna Soafer, 'Introduction' in Joanna Soafer (ed.), *Material Identities* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 3.

¹¹⁹ Janet Hoskins, 'Agency, Biography and Objects' in Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susan Küchler, Mike Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (eds), *Handbook of Material Culture* (London, 2006), pp. 77-80.

¹²⁰ Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford, 2000), p. 121.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

collective imaginary'.¹²² This thesis is indebted to such understandings of the power of material objects.

Scholars of material cultures argue that objects not only have social lives, they also have life cycles.¹²³ To unravel the idea of an object's 'life cycle' more fully it is useful to consider the example of the handbills discussed in this research. The handbill begins its life indistinct from the multitude of identical others printed alongside it although it already has a relationship to the individual or group who felt compelled to print them. The next most significant landmark for the item is when it reaches the location of its exchange from one individual to another. At this point its materiality becomes deeply significant. The size or weight of the paper could for example, make it easy to tear, susceptible to the rainfall that may damage it or the wind that might catch it and carry it on the breeze, easy to conceal from authorities who deem the item seditious or a multitude of other considerations that are gained from more than simply considering the text upon the paper. Additionally, the object signifies to individuals passing by that the person distributing the handbill is aligned with the cause it agitates, conversely, refusal to accept the exchange offered the passing individual demonstrates a lack of unity or engagement with the issue in question. Once the handbill passes into new ownership it is infused with a new set of communicative powers. It can signify dismissal should the owner choose to discard the handbill, or identification if they fold it neatly and place it in

¹²² Neil Jarman, 'Painting Landscapes: The Place of Murals in the Symbolic Construction of Urban Space' in Michael E. Geisler (ed.), *National Symbols, Fractured Identities: Contesting the National Narrative* (Lebanon, 2005), p. 172.

¹²³ Appadurai, 'Introduction', p. 57.

their pocket for example. This explanation of the movement of the handbill between owners and through space is intended to serve as an example of the different life stages of the object. However, as historians we are clearly unable to ascertain how many of the handbills were casually discarded or whether, for instance, it was raining on the day in question. In certain respects we are always looking at an object in one stage of its life cycle and attempting to situate it in another. Take, for example, the scrapbooks that are considered. They currently reside in an archive wherein the relationship between the individual and the object is a highly choreographed affair imbued with cultural expectations of respect and even deference to the objects and documents they contain. The scrapbooks often contain handbills thus indicating that for some contemporary individuals they were items of worth to be preserved and kept. However, the scrapbook as a whole represents an entirely new and unique item that communicates across the ages between the original compiler and the historian. The care that went into the item's creation, the placement of each item, and the annotations that so often surround each object communicates an individual narrative and an emotive relationship to the political events they describe. When talking about individual mediations and emotive responses to objects it is possible only to ascertain so much. The slivers of insight that have been left to us by the owners of the objects are often expressed through their treatment of the object rather than any explicit pronouncement about its worth. We can, however, also consider the individual handbills, ballads, poems and images that reside within these scrapbooks and consider them alongside often single examples of the same from other archives and begin to ascertain a

picture of the prominence of certain ephemera on the streets when these scrapbooks were produced. Many of the scrapbooks that were compiled also contain brief notes and give additional details about the items included within. In some cases, such as the scrapbook of Elsie Mahaffy, items are placed within a fulsome account of the individuals' experiences of the events to which the ephemera relate. Thus, we are able to treat the scrapbooks as objects of material culture, but also, compendiums of ephemera that individually indicate what materials were in circulation following the Easter Rising.

Structure of this Thesis

This thesis is comprised of four chapters that follow a chronological arc from the 1890s to September 1917. The first of these discusses the period between 1890 and 1916 in order to frame the more temporally limited explorations that precede it. The final three chapters consider the Easter Rising in 1916, its immediate aftermath and the period of internment, and the death of Thomas Ashe following the general amnesty of 1917.

The first chapter argues for the importance of considering the performances of advanced nationalism in the context of the broader cultural-political milieu of Dublin at the *fin de siècle*. This broader environment is 'a lost world which historians have done little to recover'.¹²⁴ The intersection between cultural nationalism and *fin de siècle* modernity has been the subject of research by literary scholars. However, the focus has overwhelmingly been on the high modernism of W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge and

¹²⁴ Senia Pašeta, *Thomas Kettle* (Dublin, 2008).

James Joyce, and the connections of the former to the Abbey Theatre. However, it is important to give greater consideration to the relationships between stage performers and their audiences at Dublin's other theatres, notably the Queen's Theatre. Such an investigation provides a better understanding of the articulation and reception of nationalist sentiment on the stages of Dublin than is possible by a focus on the Abbey theatre and its small audience drawn from a narrow demographic. The chapter then expands beyond the formally constituted performance spaces of the theatres and argues that the central streets of Dublin formed a vital nexus of spaces where performances of identity, entertainment and spectatorship coalesced. The nationalist publication *The Leader* is analysed alongside *The Irish Playgoer* to contend that advanced nationalists framed their arguments for an independent sovereign relationship from England through anxieties, particularly around gender, and identity that typified broader debates at the *fin de siècle*.¹²⁵ *The Irish Playgoer* has been chosen as a publication because of the attention it paid to the experiences and reactions of the audience in theatres and the way it situated the theatres within a broader milieu of urban spectatorship. Meanwhile *The Leader* has been selected for analysis over and above other nationalist journals because it represents an extreme of cultural nationalism.¹²⁶ Consequently, rather than taking an introverted

¹²⁵ The mainstream national press is not the subject of specific analysis in this thesis. However, further information about the scope, circulation, political affiliations and tone of these newspapers can be found in Hugh Oram, *The Newspaper Book: A History of Newspapers in Ireland, 1649-1983* (Dublin, 1983); Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850-1892* (Dublin, 1999); Mark O'Brien, *The Irish Times: A History* (Dublin, 2008); L.M. Cullen, *Eason & Son: A History* (Dublin, 1989), Kevin Rafter (ed.), *Irish Journalism Before Independence: More a Disease than a Profession* (Manchester, 2011) and John J. Dunne, *Headlines and Haloes* (Dublin, 1988).

¹²⁶ For more information on *The Leader* and its editor, D. P. Moran see Patrick Maume, *D. P. Moran* (Dundalk, 1995).

approach to the cultural nationalist movement D.P Moran's journal is constantly engaging with the wider community in which it operates. As a result, it is an extremely useful publication for exploring the ways advanced nationalists were engaging with debates around the public entertainment and city life at the turn of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the use of urban space by advanced nationalists are shown to be best understood within a broader culture of political performance that takes into account public reactions to the Boer War, trade union disputes, demonstrations by suffragettes, and the activities of parliamentary nationalists. Finally, a close reading of the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa is provided. The purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate how an increasingly unified body of advanced nationalists used the funeral as an opportunity to claim space within the city to communicate a more militant agenda. Their ability to use the topography of Dublin, the body of O'Donovan Rossa and ephemera to narrate the increasing power of militant advanced nationalists over constitutional nationalists was successful because their audience was fully adept at reading such visual displays.

Chapter Two of this thesis argues that, in contrast to previous examples of political performances enacted in the public spaces of the city, the Easter Rising was unintelligible to its audience. The confusion that surrounded the Easter Rising from the countermanding order through to the haphazard surrender has been observed in many accounts of the Rising, both scholarly and otherwise.¹²⁷ However, this chapter shifts the focus away from these characterisations of confusion caused by logistical concerns and

¹²⁷ Wills, *Dublin 1916*; McGarry, *The Rising* and James Moran, *Staging the Rising*.

poor communication to argue that it was, in fact, an endemic feature of the Rising. The chapter makes extensive use of witness statements from the Bureau of Military History, alongside other first-hand contemporary and retrospective accounts to elucidate this theme of confusion further and to focus specifically on the reception of the Rising by civilian non-combatants. In so doing, this chapter offers two major conclusions. The first is that the Easter Rising failed as a performance because the rebels who participated in it had fundamentally divergent ideas about how to go about performing the role of a republican citizen. This was particularly clear in attitudes towards female combatants and attitudes towards weaponry. Secondly, civilians were initially an interactive audience seeking to engage with the rebel's performance, as they would have done with previous examples of political street theatre and actual theatrical performances. However, as the fighting intensified civilian experiences of the Rising were characterised by a fundamentally changed relationship to the city and ultimately a retreat, to interior spaces, away from the streets, thus denying the rebels a non-combatant audience for their performance.

Chapter three uses ephemera to consider the development and circulation of narratives that sought to make sense of the Rising in its aftermath. Advanced nationalists competed with commercially interested parties to create an interpretive framework of the Rising. Meanwhile, the state, attempting to limit the space afforded to ephemera, declared it seditious. The relationship between ephemera relating to the Rising and those who consumed it is investigated through a specific focus on key items, such as postcards by the Powell Press and illustrated souvenir publications.

It is clear that the consistent replication of images and key details about the Rising served to make the leaders, and the chronology, of the Rising recognisable and intelligible. Furthermore, this information was increasingly represented as a narrative of blood sacrifice. Crucially, however, evidence is provided, in the form of scrapbooks for instance, to prove that individuals modified the available ephemera, and displayed it in ways that reflected a more nuanced and personalised reflection on these narratives. This chapter also notes the trend for seeking relics, both of the leaders and the city, in the aftermath of the Rising. The unique nature of these relics and their direct connection to the Rising and its leaders allowed their owner to claim a more authentic relationship with the event and its participants. The pursuit of relics also brought individuals into direct contact with the leaders', predominantly female, relatives. Thus, the advanced nationalist community was provided with a platform through which to harness a narrative of the Rising and cultivate favourable public opinion. The trauma that Dubliners associated with the destruction of spaces within the city that had previously facilitated the display of urban spectacle and identity performance was a significant cause of the hostility shown towards the rebels. This thesis will demonstrate how the advanced nationalist community responded to this public trauma over the destruction of the city by returning to earlier spaces of political interaction, such as the theatres, to court popular opinion in the aftermath of the Rising. Related to this renewed use of public space by advanced nationalists is a discussion of how they also made exhaustive uses of churches in the city to circumvent attempts by the authorities to minimise the political platforms available to

advanced nationalists. In so doing the advanced nationalist community were able to more fully relate a sacrificial narrative of the Rising and establish the leaders of the Rising as martyrs to a sacred cause through their combined use of religious culture and relics.

Chapter four presents an analysis of the death and funeral of Thomas Ashe to explore how, seventeen months after the Rising, the returned internees took to the streets once more in a tightly controlled political performance. Through the circulation of ephemera and the control of space, the organisers of Ashe's funeral, in particular those who had returned from internment, were able to narrate a political identity and agenda that was not only fully intelligible to its audience but garnered sympathy and support. Furthermore, as procession of armed Volunteers and other advanced nationalists escorted Ashe's body through the city they were able to use an older tradition of political funerals to incorporate the topography of the Easter Rising onto an older map of nationalist landmarks that were already familiar to the wider public. In doing so, advanced nationalists were able to rehabilitate the Rising into a coherent narrative of nationalist insurrections against British rule. A crucial factor in the ability of republicans to achieve this was through their use of a mass-produced image of Thomas Ashe, and his last poem *Let Me Carry Your Cross for Ireland, Lord*, to create a relic of the dead hunger striker. These were circulated during the funeral, alongside handbills giving damning pronouncements on the nature of Ashe's death by the Church and the state inquest, to present a narrative that integrated themes of republican blood sacrifice with evidence of misrule by the colonial power. These relics resembled the relics that had circulated during

internment. However, their relationship to the spaces in which they circulated and the body of Ashe imbued them with a more profound emotional power and an increased ability to communicate meaning. In short, the final chapter of this research presents the funeral of Thomas Ashe as the moment when advanced nationalist, or, more precisely by this stage, republican performers were reunited with their audience.

1

Performance and Politics in *Fin de Siècle* Dublin

The period from 1890 until the outbreak of the Easter Rising has typically been recognised as one that witnessed the development of cultural nationalism and the resurgence of extra-parliamentary nationalism.¹²⁸ It was an era that saw a rapid rise in the number of organisations committed to the articulation and realisation of a recognisable Irish identity.¹²⁹ These organisations took the form of political groups, such as the Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, Inghinidhe na hÉireann, and Sinn Féin. Furthermore, societies were also established that turned their attentions to the revival of the Irish language, Gaelic sports, drama, and Irish crafts. There can be little argument against the profound significance of these developments.

However, the quarter of a century in which these developments took place was also one of profound change throughout Europe. In this latter context the period between 1890 and the outbreak of World War One in 1914 is referred to as the *fin de siècle*. It was an era characterised, in its first half, by a great cultural expansion in arts and entertainment, and in scientific progress and discovery. The later part of the period was one that saw a heavily militarised investment in categories of nationhood, and these were

¹²⁸ Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, pp. 431-461.

¹²⁹ Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin, 1981) and Matthews, *Revival*.

expressly articulated through heavily gendered discourses of the body. These discourses have been relatively under explored in the Irish context. Studies that concern themselves with the modernist works of W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge, and James Joyce are perhaps the exceptions to this rule.¹³⁰ More recently developing interest in masculinity has led to research that focuses on sport and male youth.¹³¹ These studies explore the ways in which idealised stereotypes of Irish masculinity were taught and reinforced. However, they are also quick to point out that anxieties about the physical and moral health of men were prevalent across Europe amid fears that the decadence of the early 1890s had led to a degeneration that would ultimately weaken the nation.¹³² The argument put forward in this chapter goes further. It argues that an understanding of Dublin as a cosmopolitan *fin de siècle* city is vital to an understanding of the ways in which advanced nationalists sought to articulate their beliefs about Irish identity to a wider audience. Moreover, it will argue that they were one voice in a cacophony of competing discourses that articulated themselves through the spaces of entertainment and spectacle in the city.

This chapter takes as its starting point an exploration of Dublin's theatres. In doing so, it seeks to prove that the heavy onus placed by current

¹³⁰ George J. Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O'Casey* (2nd edn, Washington, 1994) and Stephen Regan 'W.B Yeats and Irish Cultural Politics in the 1890s' in Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (eds), *Cultural Politics at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 66-85.

¹³¹ Sara Brady, 'Sporting Irish Identities: Performance and the Gaelic Games' in Fintan Walsh and Sara Brady (eds), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 34-44 and Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, 2004); Marnie Hay, 'This Treasured Island: Irish Nationalist Propaganda Aimed at Children and Youth, 1910-16', in Mary Shine Thompson and Celia Keenan (eds.), *Treasure Islands: Studies in Children's Literature* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 33-44.

¹³² McGarry, *The Rising*, p. 24 and Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, p. 9.

scholarship on the Abbey theatre's role in shaping nationalist discourse amongst the broader Irish populace is misleading and obscures the ways in which national debates played out in vastly more popular playhouses, such as the Queen's Theatre. A focus on these more mainstream theatrical venues illustrates that audiences were highly interactive and entirely at ease with reading the political subtexts of seemingly light entertainment. It will be argued that nationalist debates about performances in theatres, both on stage and off, used the contemporary language of anxiety that was being widely used and characterised the *fin de siècle*, to express views about gender and sexuality, in order to argue for a cultural separation from England. In developing this idea further the chapter proceeds to chart the way in which the city constituted a more broadly defined performance space where, once again, nationalists employed a contemporary rhetoric of degeneracy, vice, and compromised morality to demonstrate their arguments for separation from British rule. Having established that the streets of Dublin were vibrant sites of identity performance and spectacle, the chapter then seeks to demonstrate the strategies deployed by nationalists to invest their identities and beliefs in these spaces. I will argue that as the period progressed this use of public space, became more militant and fractious. Finally, a close analysis will be made of the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in order to show how, by 1915, advanced nationalists were able to command and manipulate the spaces of the Dublin streets. They used this command of space to process O'Donovan Rossa's body through the streets in a spectacle that, to an audience so attuned to political street theatre, brought a unity between the new cultural and political

associations alluded to earlier, and the ascendancy of militant, physical force nationalism.

The Home of Irish Drama in *Fin de Siècle* Dublin

The Theatres

On the eve of the twentieth-century, Dublin boasted a number of theatrical venues. There were three major theatres: the Theatre Royal, the Gaiety Theatre and the Queen's Royal Theatre (hereafter, the Queen's).¹³³ There were also numerous smaller theatres such as the Abbey Theatre, the Lyric, and Dan Lowery's Star of Erin Music Hall (reopened as the Empire Palace Theatre in 1897).¹³⁴ In addition to these established performance houses there were a number of venues that hosted theatrical events, recitals, 'smokers', and benefit concerts on a more irregular basis.¹³⁵ The expiration of licenses, failure to make profit, and misadventure, such as the fire that destroyed the original Theatre Royal, led to a certain degree of fluctuation in the spaces that made up Dublin's theatrical landscape at the turn of the century. However, the broad palette of melodrama, variety, light opera and

¹³³ Peter Kavanagh, *The Irish Theatre* (Tralee, 1946), pp. 388-395. The Theatre Royal burnt to the ground on the 9 February 1880. The New Theatre Royal was built on the same site and opened in 1897. However, in the intervening years the Leinster Hall occupied the same site providing Dublin audiences with performances of drama and light opera, without a royal patent. A major theatre is defined here as one which had a capacity of over 1,500 and that operated as such throughout the period, bringing large audiences and regularly changing their billing.

¹³⁴ Kavanagh, *The Irish Theatre*, p. 388-395. Whilst the Irish National Theatre Society did not open the Abbey Theatre until 1904, W.B. Yeats and Lady Gregory were showing their productions at the Antient Concert Rooms and the Gaiety Theatre under the auspices of the Irish Literary Theatre prior to this. These earlier performances will also be considered in the analysis that follows.

¹³⁵ The most popular of these venues appears to have been the Rotunda and the Antient Concert Rooms. 'Smokers' are described in the *Irish Playgoer* as evenings of light variety entertainment where an ounce of tobacco was included in the price of entry, and where smoking formed a central part of the evening's entertainment.

traditional drama that was on offer to audiences appears to have remained relatively stable throughout the period, at least up until the Easter Rising.¹³⁶

The Gaiety Theatre and the Theatre Royal were established as touring houses with the express aim of bringing English companies to Dublin to perform.¹³⁷ Perhaps as a consequence of this close link to London the two touring houses were viewed as the only theatres providing Dublin audiences with 'legitimate' drama.¹³⁸ This drama appears to have been largely comprised of operatic performances, with Wagner and light comic operas being particularly popular, as well as plays by Shakespeare and melodramas.¹³⁹ Plays dealing with an Irish subject matter were, in theatres other than the Queen's, almost exclusively limited to the melodramas of Dion Boucicault. Whilst the 'stage Irishman' remained popular on the London stage plays containing such characters appear to have been snubbed in Dublin, for obvious reasons.¹⁴⁰ It has also been suggested that the popularity of plays depicting Ireland resulted from the interest of metropolitan audiences in the exotic and not demand for representations of the familiar from Dublin.¹⁴¹ In short, the performances at the major touring houses were 'practically indistinguishable from that of leading London

¹³⁶ Following the Rising, theatres had to contend with the damage caused to their buildings, the internement of men and curfews. These added to the extant pressures caused by the rise of the film industry. Theatres also began to reflect contemporary interest in the Rising in the performances they offered.

¹³⁷ Nicholas Grene and Christopher Morash, 'Introduction: Theatre and Diaspora', in Nicholas Grene and Christopher Morash (eds), *Irish Theatre on Tour*, (Dublin, 2005), pp. xii.

¹³⁸ Kavanagh, *The Irish Theatre*, p. 391.

¹³⁹ Kavanagh, *The Irish Theatre*, p. 390. Advertisements from the *Freeman's Journal* also give a good indication of the performances on offer.

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Fitz-Simon, *The Irish Theatre* (London, 1983), p. 94 and Christopher Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre 1601-2000* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 108. See also, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, 'National Identities in Performance: The Stage Englishman of Boucicault's Irish Drama', *Theatre Journal*, 49:3 (1997), pp. 287-300.

¹⁴¹ Hienz Kosok, 'The Image of Ireland in Nineteenth Century Drama', in Jacqueline Genet and Richard Cave (eds), *Perspectives of Irish Drama and Theatre* (Gerards Cross, 1991), p. 55.

theatres' and made little attempt to differentiate between the desires of the audiences found in Dublin and London.¹⁴² There were, however, two theatres, the Abbey and the Queen's, that stood out at the turn of the twentieth century as having the stated intention of providing Irish theatre for their Dublin audience.¹⁴³

The Abbey Theatre has dominated the attention of scholars investigating Irish theatre at the turn of the century.¹⁴⁴ This is in part because William Butler Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory consciously set out to create a national theatre and knowingly situated the Abbey within the wider trend of Gaelic revival and cultural nationalism. P. J. Matthews succinctly summarises the significance of the Abbey by claiming that, alongside the Gaelic League, Sinn Féin, and the National University, the theatre created an 'infrastructure... which allowed the "imagining" of the Irish nation'.¹⁴⁵ However, conflating the intellectual significance of the Abbey Theatre with its impact on the populous of Dublin is problematic. The simple fact of the theatre's size meant that performances only ever reached a limited audience. The first production of *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*, a performance that has served as a touchstone and a 'prelude to many things' in almost every academic analysis of the theatre's role in the development of

¹⁴² Kosok, 'The Image of Ireland', p. 50.

¹⁴³ Kosok, 'The Image of Ireland', p. 50. Although Dunne, *Headlines and Haloes*, p. 18 notes that Pat Feeney dressed nightly as Robert Emmet at Dan Lowery's Star of Erin, later the Empire theatre, in 1888.

¹⁴⁴ See George Cusack, *The Politics of Identity in Irish Drama; W.B. Yeats, Augusta Gregory and J.M. Synge* (Abingdon, 2009), Ben Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation: Irish Drama and Cultural Nationalism, 1890-1916* (Oxford, 2003), Christopher Murray, *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: Mirror up to Nation* (Manchester, 1997), Lionel Pilkington, *Theatre and the State in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (London: New York, 2001) and Mary Trotter, *Ireland's National Theatres: Political Performance and the Origins of the Irish Dramatic Movement* (New York, 2001).

¹⁴⁵ Matthews, *Revival*, p. 10.

advanced nationalism, 'could not have been seen by more than five hundred people over three nights, most of whom could barely see'.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, when anti-British comments were made during a performance by the National Literary Society at the Gaiety, an action that would have been typical on the boards at the Queens, the audience responded with uproar and the players were chastised in the press for their cheap attempt to court nationalist favour.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, Annie Horniman's patronage of the Abbey meant that, until 1910 when she withdrew her support, Yeats and Gregory were less bound by the need for profit than other theatres. As a result, they were less reliant on the audience's appreciation of a performance for survival. Even when Yeats was still seeking guarantors for the theatre there were already accusations that he was uninterested in courting the interests of the audience.¹⁴⁸ The security of patronage also allowed the Abbey's directors the freedom to break with a number of practices that typified contemporary theatre attendance in Dublin. Ticket prices at the Abbey started at one shilling, thus excluding the predominantly working-class theatregoer who would usually have purchased the usual six pence and three pence tickets. In addition, smoking was prohibited in the auditorium and the doors were locked once the performance had begun. The freedom of movement and didactic relationship between the audience and performers that characterised theatre attendance at the time were also prohibited. In other theatres around Dublin men would move freely between the bar and the auditorium during the performance; women would exchange gossip, and

¹⁴⁶ Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh, *The Splendid Years: Recollections of Maire Nic Shiubhlaigh* (Dublin, 1955), p. 2 and Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*, p. 123.

¹⁴⁷ *The Irish Playgoer*, 26 February 1900.

¹⁴⁸ *The Irish Playgoer*, 23 November 1899.

the problem caused by orange peel and other ‘objectionable missiles’ being thrown from the gallery was such that one playgoer, in reference to the Lyric theatre, appealed to have a ‘board from the base of the railing of the gallery [to] protect the lower part of the house’.¹⁴⁹ However, the Abbey theatre management demanded that the audience give their full attention to the stage and that they silently absorbed the action being performed in front of them.¹⁵⁰

The restrictions placed upon the audience of the Abbey could not have been further from the experience of an audience member at the Queen’s Theatre. This is a significant difference because the theatre had, from 1884 when J. Whitbread took over its management, proclaimed itself the ‘home of Irish theatre’.¹⁵¹ Whilst the pre-eminence of the Abbey for Irish drama is now taken for granted, at the turn of the twentieth century the Queen’s was actually far more popular, indicative of the playgoer’s experience and showed a well-liked range of plays with nationalist themes. Whitbread himself had achieved a reputation as ‘one of the very few Englishmen (if we may even class him as such) capable of writing an Irish play without introducing that grotesque atrocity the “stage Irishman”’.¹⁵² Playbills for the Queen’s theatre proudly advertised that ‘smoking [was] permitted in all parts’.¹⁵³ A ticket price at the Queen’s ranged from three

¹⁴⁹ *The Irish Playgoer*, 25 January 1900. Also, see *The Irish Playgoer*, 9 November 1899.

¹⁵⁰ Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*, p. 131.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109. Also see Queen’s Theatre Playbills, 1915-1917, Dublin and Ireland Collection, Dublin City Archive and Queen’s Theatre 1876-1947, Irish Theatre Playbills, DCA for examples of the Queen’s theatre playbills that state ‘Home of Irish Theatre’ underneath the theatre’s name.

¹⁵² *The Irish Playgoer*, 14 December 1899.

¹⁵³ Queen’s Theatre Playbill, 1915-1917, Dublin and Ireland Collection and Queen’s Theatre 1876-1947, Irish Theatre Playbills.

pence in the gallery to two shillings and sixpence the boxes.¹⁵⁴ The Queen's, like the Theatre Royal and the Gaiety, had the capacity to seat up to two thousand people a night and it was a popular venue, especially for the Dublin working classes.¹⁵⁵ Accounts, such as those by noted theatre attendee and critic, Joseph Holloway, record that audiences frequently called out, either in appreciation or disapproval. In fact audience responses were so typical that they had become the focus of humorous reflections and satire as the following excerpt from Holloway's 'Dublin Notes' illustrates:

Alas! What a number of actors + reciters would answer to this description – 'Don't be angry, Hugh, I think, of course, you're an infinitely better actor than, Katcall, But Katcall does know his business, Why, he was born + bred on these boards', 'And acts as though he's been carved out of 'em'.¹⁵⁶

Within the numerous music halls and variety theatres across Dublin the demarcation between the audience and performer was loosely defined. There was an acknowledgment that the audience were also actors of a sort and formed part of the evening's entertainment. During the pantomime season of 1899 the gallery at the Theatre Royal 'had the performance to themselves. Now and then they'd let the people on stage have a look in, but for never more than five minutes at a time'.¹⁵⁷ There were times when those in the gallery went too far in their ribald behaviour but, generally speaking, participation from the gallery was something that performers on stage had

¹⁵⁴ A ticket in the pit cost 6d, the upper circle 1/- and the dress circle cost 1/6. Available playbills and programmes suggest these prices were typical.

¹⁵⁵ Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁶ Dublin Notes by Joseph Holloway, MS 4150, NLI. Excerpts of Joseph Holloway's extensive diaries have been published along with a very informative preface by Harry T. Moore. See Robert Hogan and Michael J. O'Neill (eds), *Joseph Holloway's Abbey Theatre: A Selection from his Unpublished Journal 'Impressions of a Dublin Playgoer'* (Illinois, 1967).

¹⁵⁷ *The Irish Playgoer*, 28 December 1899.

to accommodate or risk the failure of their production.¹⁵⁸ For example, the conductor at one performance noticed ‘a little spice of the divil [sic]’ amongst the gallery ‘and saved the situation nicely when he had foolishly tried to prevent a repetition of that queer, if lively, mixture of Irish jig, high kicking, and skirt dancing in the last act’.¹⁵⁹ The individuals who inhabited ‘the packed pit and... very bedlam of [the] gallery’ at the Queen’s theatre were famous for forming an audience who were ‘true as steel to the old house’ and examples *par excellence* of the didactic relationship between the audience and performer that the aforementioned conductor had successfully navigated.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, as Morash explains, while other theatres ‘brought together a Wagnerite audience, or a minstrel show audience...for a single night, the Queen’s was able to forge something like a community, where the theatre became a noisy, active place in which the audience worked with the performer in the creation of a play’.¹⁶¹ One of Holloway’s descriptions of a night at the Queen’s captures this sense of community and also the noise and energy in which the programme of Irish drama was consumed

We have arrived... to witness a mixed-middling performance of J.W. Whitbread’s romantic Irish drama, “Lord Edward”, or ‘98”, in five acts. During the opening acts, most of the performance was carried on in dumb show, owing to the ructions of the “boys” on top – a noisier audience never assembled, I would be inclined to think. I was standing in a crush all the time, but, nevertheless, remained for four acts.... Patriotic sentiment was cheered, and the villains hissed all over the place – excitement ran high at times... The floor of the pit was covered with orange peel before the end of the play, and

¹⁵⁸ *The Irish Playgoer*, 11 January 1900.

¹⁵⁹ *The Irish Playgoer*, 9 November 1899.

¹⁶⁰ *The Irish Playgoer*, 12 April 1900. This particular article can be attributed to Joseph Holloway.

¹⁶¹ Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*, p. 110.

exclamations of “isn’t she a lovely character,” or “isn’t he a grand character,” were ever in the air.¹⁶²

It is clear therefore, that the Abbey Theatre was making a significant departure from the accepted culture of theatre attendance and was attempting to impose a set of behavioural practices on their audience that was not seen in other Dublin theatres. More significantly, these restrictions on the movement and speech of the audience placed them in an unambiguously receptive role to the action performed on stage. The riot that broke out during the production of J.M. Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* is testament to the fact that the Abbey’s audience was not always willing to be tamed. However, whereas at other Dublin theatres participation was a regular feature of performances, the riot of 1907 stands out as a significant rarity when the audience engaged with the action on stage.¹⁶³ The extent of the audience reactions to Synge’s play was remarkable, however, whether the reaction would have been so vehement in a theatre that allowed a more didactic engagement as a matter of course is questionable. Interestingly, the premiere of *Playboy of the Western World* was the first time the Abbey had sold seats for six pence, thus allowing entry to audience members who would have been more familiar with the Queen’s theatre and its culture of audience involvement.¹⁶⁴ At the Queen’s that involvement did not evolve into riots because it was permissible within certain limits. As a result it was usually contained to hisses and katechism. The Abbey, however, had no such outlet for audience reactions. Critical assessment of the Playboy riots

¹⁶² *The Irish Playgoer*, 12 April 1900.

¹⁶³ Neil Martin Blackadder, *Performing Opposition: Modern Theatre and the Scandalized Audience* (Westport, 2003), p. 79.

¹⁶⁴ Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*, p. 137.

broadly agrees that they were a response to the unacceptable characterisation of the western Irish peasants, who had been valorised by nationalists as pure embodiments of the Irish character, as sexually immoral and accepting of patricide.¹⁶⁵

Plays at the Abbey frequently used female characters to symbolically represent Ireland. As numerous scholars have addressed this led to an impossible duality in constructions of Irish womanhood.¹⁶⁶ On the one hand it was a societal expectation that women would fulfil the sexual roles of marriage and procreation. However, there also existed a host of abstracted iconic symbols of de-sexualised, or at least, sexually unobtainable women, upon which national identity became inscribed.¹⁶⁷ Synge's departure from this familiar trope and attempt to represent his interpretation of authentic western Irish peasants led to the outcry that would ferment into the week long riots. Neither would the riots be the last time when a challenge to the hegemonic view of nationalist Ireland would be, in effect, censored by the audience. This is an irony that has been noted as Ireland, which escaped the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain's office, had the freest stages in the

¹⁶⁵ Phillip Zarilli, Bruce McConachie, Gary Jay Williams, Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei (eds), *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* (2nd edn, Abingdon, 2010), p. 295; Paige Reynolds, *Modernism, Drama and the Audience for Irish Spectacle* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 38. Senia Pašeta also notes similar protests that greeted the first production of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. See Pašeta, *Thomas Kettle*.

¹⁶⁶ Maria-Elena Doyle, 'A Spindle for the Battle: Feminism, Myth, and the Woman-Nation in Irish Revival Drama', *Theatre Journal*, 51:1 (1999), pp. 33-34 notes the role of Inghinidhe na hÉireann in bringing *Cathleen ni Houlihan* to the stage. This highlights the paradox of the Abbey theatre that, whilst many of their plays dealt with abstract, highly symbolic and idealised portrayals womanhood, there were a large number of women who were actively involved in the theatre's daily management.

¹⁶⁷ Susan Cannon-Harris, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama* (Indianapolis, 2002); Reynolds, *Modernism*, Bernadette Sweeney, *Performing the Body in Irish Theatre* (Basingstoke, 2008); Melissa Sihra (ed.), *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation* (Basingstoke, 2007).

British Isles.¹⁶⁸ Cathy Leeney has also pointed out that the conservatism of the Catholic Church and advanced nationalist community combined to form another equivalent form of censorship.¹⁶⁹ Audience responses to the *Playboy of the Western World* encapsulate a conflict within the *raison d'être* of the Abbey. In a letter written to Lady Gregory entitled 'A People's Theatre' Yeats explained that 'we did not set out to create this sort of theatre'.¹⁷⁰ Instead, he had set out to create 'a theatre for Ireland and for poetry'.¹⁷¹ The Abbey was intended to be a national theatre but that purpose was at odds with its exclusion of some of those very people who comprised the nation, namely, the Dublin working class. It was to be a stage upon which the nation would be created and displayed to an audience in an act of pedagogy. This view of the Abbey's purpose was not unproblematic. Yeats received heavy criticism when he called on the assistance of the police during the *Playboy* riots. It was an action that was interpreted as a betrayal of the *parterre* because he chose a representative of the British establishment from his own class rather than engaging with the Irish working class.¹⁷² Padric Colum wrote to Lady Gregory in 1906 to complain, 'that we are becoming less and less a theatre of the people'.¹⁷³ Colum went on to write to Willie Fay to explain further that he didn't think the Abbey should tour, stating, 'my ideal is a people's theatre, and I'd rather work for the Gallery of the Queen's than

¹⁶⁸ Cathy Leeney, 'Interchapter I: 1900-1939', in Melissa Sihra (ed.), *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 26.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Micheál MacLiammóir, *Theatre in Ireland*, (Dublin, 1950), p. 12.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Reynolds, *Modernism*, p. 70.

¹⁷³ Padric Colum quoted in Anthony Roche, 'Lady Gregory: The Politics of Touring Ireland', in Nicholas Greene and Christopher Morash (eds), *Irish Theatre on Tour*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 53.

for a few people in the Halls'.¹⁷⁴ Not only does this correspondence show that there was dissent among those working for the Abbey about the aims of the theatre but also, that there was a separation between the national theatre project of the Abbey and 'the people' of the Queen's. The obscurity of Irish modernist performances was viewed as antagonistic to 'real playgoers'.¹⁷⁵ Holloway suggested that 'if the Irish Literary Society really wanted to know what theatre was all about... they should see "a revival of *Lord Edward* or '98 at the Queen's Theatre"'.¹⁷⁶ The modernists of the Abbey feared the degeneracy of the 'filthy modern tide' of contemporary life, whereas the Queen's, for all of its mechanised sentimentality, sought to bring the public the very latest in modern spectacle.¹⁷⁷ This was to remain the case until 1910 when the Abbey's loss of its patron forced 'the directors out of over-comfortable detachment back into close proximity with the body politic'.¹⁷⁸ Beyond the stage of the Abbey and its self-conscious and romanticised depictions of Irish culture and identity, theatre productions appear to have been based either in variety or melodrama.¹⁷⁹ The appeal of the latter was its ability to provide diversity, unambiguous moral standards, the execution of absolute justice and 'a dream world that afforded its spectators some fleeting escape from the often brutal realities of their

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Joseph Holloway quoted in Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre*, p. 119.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. Similar sentiments were regularly expressed, both in *The Irish Playgoer* and *The Leader* at the time.

¹⁷⁷ Sinéad Garrigan Mattar, *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival* (Oxford, 2004) and Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation*, p. 207.

¹⁷⁸ Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation*, p. 183-184.

¹⁷⁹ Playbills preserved in the Dublin City and Theatre Archive, and advertisements in the *Freeman's Journal*, show the frequency with which melodramas were performed. As theatres survived on the audience's appreciation for the productions on offer the surviving playbills are a good indicator of their popularity.

lives'.¹⁸⁰ The Queen's theatre was no exception and *Wolfe Tone*, *Lord Edward* and *Sarsfield*, among numerous others, were melodramas with nationalist themes that allowed audiences to vociferously cheer for the Irish hero of the piece and boo and hiss when a figure of English authority or an Irish traitor, came on stage. It would be wrong to assume that the riots at the Abbey theatre indicate it was the only playhouse to provoke anxiety and grievance among nationalists. In fact, whilst the riots are useful as providing a temporally contained moment in which a number of tensions within Irish nationalism become visible, longer, on-going concerns over the entertainment in theatres, both on and off stage, also provide a useful study of the way in which advanced nationalist concerns coincided with public debate about modern entertainments.

The Leader is one example of a nationalist publication that included lengthy articles about theatrical performances. Established in 1900, the tone of the paper was set by D.P. Moran, its editor and founder.¹⁸¹ Moran was an 'ethnocentric' nationalist who did not believe Protestants could be truly Irish.¹⁸² He was deeply invested in the resurrection of the Irish language and encouraged the consumer campaigns to preference Irish produce and industry through the advertisements section in the paper. The paper was targeted towards a readership of the lower-middle class Catholic nationalists.¹⁸³ The tone of the paper was forthright and frequently used sarcasm to attack those who did not share Moran's views on nationalism.

¹⁸⁰ Kosok, 'The Image of Ireland', p. 54.

¹⁸¹ Maume, *D. P. Moran* and Pašeta, *Thomas Kettle*.

¹⁸² Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998*, p. 186, and Kearney, *Ireland: Contested Ideas of Nationalism*, p. 74.

¹⁸³ Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2005), p. 34.

Very little of the journal's energies were expended on reviews of the National Literature Society's productions. *The Leader* did, however, review the Abbey's production of 'Kathleen ni Houlihan' in 1905. The review was entirely scathing and consistently undermined the importance and impact of the play.

'Kathleen ni Houlihanism' makes Irish patriotism quite harmless, if not even 'respectable', a thing about which the 'best people' might utter 'isn't it charming,' or 'how pretty;' even Tony Traill [sic] and Brother Goulding might patronise it, feeling happy that if it led the youth to green sentimentality, it would keep the hand of young Ireland off such lusty nation killers and bigots as themselves. Let who will simper and sigh about 'the poor old woman' and her chanting; give us a modern man with a heart and a head and a strong hand, and make a play – not a Yeatsonian chant – about him.... We fear that Mr. Yeats, shrewd man though he is, will never touch the Irish heart. If the movement, as it is has been developed by Mr. Yeats, rang true even to the hearts of the consciously 'superior' class who are so evident these times on the edge of real Ireland, surely some one or more of them would have backed this illustrated chanting movement with their money, and not have left it to a woman of the English to supply the society with a theatre...It is interesting to note that the letting value, the 'tone', if we may say so, must not be lowered by any commerce with the sixpenny public. Unless you can afford a shilling you would be calculated to damage the 'letting value', and so this home of art undefiled, this *un*-commercial theatre, bangs its doors on the despised sixpenny public.¹⁸⁴

This review dismissively attacks the Abbey Theatre's patronage, directors, productions, and conscious exclusion from the audience of those who would normally take up seats in the gallery or pit. With the exception of this review, *The Leader* appears to have paid little significant attention to the efforts of Yeats and Gregory. Instead, it was overwhelmingly preoccupied with the music halls, which it saw as degenerate and corrupting environments that should be at the forefront of nationalist attention. Indeed,

¹⁸⁴ *The Leader*, 17 January 1905.

the greatest concern about Yeats' efforts appear to be that it was a presentation of weak, mollified, and sentimental nationality which was ultimately damaging to the masculine and dynamic nationalism the editors of *The Leader* sought to cultivate. Articles in nationalist publications such as *Our Boys*, and *The Leader* used the language of degeneracy, vice and corruption to write about their concerns over music hall entertainment. Gaelic League publications worried that 'the vulgarities and veiled indecencies of the London music hall' was taking the place of Irish concerts and social gatherings.¹⁸⁵ The language of degeneracy, vice and corruption was characteristic of the way in which *fin de siècle* anxieties were expressed across Europe. The *fin de siècle* was characterised by conflicting social and cultural responses to modernity that moved between anxiety and optimism.¹⁸⁶ Holbrook Jackson, who historicised the 1890s as early as 1914, argued that Oscar Wilde's trial of 1895 neatly divided a decade, the first half of which was 'remarkable for a literacy and artistic renaissance, degenerating into decadence; the second for a new sense of patriotism degenerating into jingoism'.¹⁸⁷ Typically, analysis focused upon London and Paris, frequently linking them through a shared experience of commodity culture and the anxiety it produced.¹⁸⁸ These anxieties were produced by a rapidly modernising world that 'blurred the very boundaries upon which identities were built: social class, sex, gender, race, nationality, and even

¹⁸⁵ A Gaelic League Catechism, CD 277/1/1, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

¹⁸⁶ Catherine Hindson, *Female Performance on the Fin-de-Siècle Popular Stages of London and Paris: Experiment and Advertisement* (Manchester, 2007), p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 5. Other scholars have utilised different time frames broadly incorporating the rise in industrial competition in the 1880s to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. See Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken, 'Introduction', in Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (eds), *Cultural Politics at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Hindson, *Female Performance*, p. 1.

what constituted the “normal”¹⁸⁹ Crucially the period was characterised by dualism. On the one hand, an excitement about all things modern and the expansion of leisure and commodity, and, on the other, a moral panic about the health of the nation. It was a period that saw the rapid development of scientific categorisation and bureaucratic structures to meet the threat of the apparent crumbling of barriers and boundaries. An increasingly medicalised discourse about public spaces and society reinforced the strong connection between the individual body with the body politic and developed ideas of the social body through discourse about contamination and disease and its spread between public and private spaces.¹⁹⁰ In this environment identity categories of gender, body and sexuality became intricately bound up with the way categories of nationhood came to be represented.¹⁹¹

Dublin is rarely examined in scholarship dedicated to the dualistic experience of excitement and panic that characterised the *fin de siècle*. Numerous studies now exist that look beyond the elite emergence of modernism in the arts to the more common social experiences of the period through sources such as journals and cheap, widely available journalism. However, their focus remains exclusive to the metropolises’ of London, Paris and, to a lesser degree, Berlin and Vienna.¹⁹² There are startlingly few studies that focus on Dublin as a cosmopolitan city during the *fin de siècle*.

This is surprising given that Dublin was the first city to mimic Britain’s Great

¹⁸⁹ Elinor Accampo and Christopher E. Forth, ‘Introduction: Confronting Modernity in *Fin-de-Siècle France*’, in Christopher E. Forth and Elinor Accampo (eds), *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds and Gender* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Pamela K. Gilbert, *Mapping the Victorian Social Body* (New York, 2004), p. 117.

¹⁹¹ Accampo and Forth, ‘Introduction’, p. 4.

¹⁹² Antony Clayton, *Decadent London: Fin de Siècle City* (London, 2005); Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin de Siècle Europe* (Basingstoke, 2010); Eugene Weber, *France: Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, 1986), Patrick McGuiness (ed.), *Symbolism, Decadence and the Fin de Siècle: French and European Perspectives* (Exeter, 2000).

Exhibition at the Crystal Palace.¹⁹³ When Ireland is considered it is to analyse the work of Yeats, Synge, and Joyce as definitive examples of high modernism. As we have already seen however, the modernist works produced by Yeats and his contemporaries at the Abbey theatre comprised only a small part of the vast range of theatrical performances on offer in Dublin at the turn of the century. Nor was the Abbey typical of the theatrical spaces, which were critical spaces for negotiating modernity. As Catherine Hindson has argued,

Drawing on the conventions and codes of the modern urban experience, they [theatres] acted as sites that not only reflected fin-de-siècle society's most evident anxieties and changes, but also contributed to them. A fusion of the spectacle, energy and pessimism characteristic of the period is evident in its venues, stars and products.¹⁹⁴

The Leader made implicit arguments for Irish independence through its discussions of music halls and other modern, urban entertainments. These arguments were made through the use of linguistic themes and arguments that were prevalent throughout the *fin de siècle*. Firstly, there was concern that moral degeneracy and corruption were slowly contaminating Ireland. Secondly, the performances on the various music hall stages were said to be corrupting men and weakening their masculinity. A particular concern over the potentially corrupting effect of these performances was attached to boys and young men. Finally, but most significantly, articles in *The Leader* express a great deal of anxiety around female sexuality. Significantly, all three of these interconnected discourses were utilised to invert metropolitan debates that centred on the health of

¹⁹³ Dickson, 'The State of Ireland's History', pp. 198-212.

¹⁹⁴ Hindson, *Female Performance*, p. 2.

the British nation and empire. In the hands of Irish nationalists *fin de siècle* discourses were used to argue that it was the English metropole that was corrupting Ireland.¹⁹⁵ Thus, contamination could only be prevented through a separation from a weak and morally degenerate imperial centre.

Casting themselves as the urban, male spectator of modern city life, a role typical of middle-class journalists at the turn of the century, an unnamed author wrote for *The Leader* of a night spent at the Lyric theatre.¹⁹⁶ The piece describes, in detail, the order of the acts that comprised the variety show, and the audience's favourable responses to the various displays of sexual innuendo and ridicule of the Church.¹⁹⁷ The performances are presented as examples of 'a moral atmosphere [that] was a disgusting example of British hypocrisy'.¹⁹⁸ However, it was the challenge the author puts to his readers whilst describing the final song, performed by a drag king styled as a 'London Johnny', that highlights the tensions evident in nationalist engagement with modern entertainment and media. 'The last song which this performance gave was low, so low that downright flat, frank indecency would be decenter [sic] and less immoral. And if this opinion is challenged we have a copy of the song and we can publish it.'¹⁹⁹ Put simply, the nationalist outrage over the performance of masculine sexual innuendo by a female performer is tempered by their tantalising threat to publish the

¹⁹⁵ Éibhear Walshe discusses nationalist engagement with the language of degeneracy, vice and masculinity prevalent during the *fin de siècle* in the context of Oscar Wilde's trial. See Éibhear Walshe, *Oscar's Shadow: Wilde, Homosexuality and Modern Ireland* (Cork, 2011), pp. 1-31.

¹⁹⁶ For more about the role of the journalist as an urban male spectator see Deborah Epstein-Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (New York, 1995).

¹⁹⁷ *The Leader*, 1 September 1900.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

song and their role in extending knowledge of the performance through their circulation.

Nationalist debates focused on the control and content of the theatres because, as contemporaries recognised,

A nation's stage is the reflex of a nation's culture. It is the product of its genius, the mirror of its intellect, the censor of its defects. In every civilised country the stage plays no inconsiderable part in the education of the masses, stimulating their aspirations, exalting their ideals, and refining conceptions of the beautiful and the good.²⁰⁰

However, each time nationalist journals wrote on the subject of the theatres, regardless of whether or not they wrote in approval or disgust, they spread a temporally and spatially confined performance to a significantly wider audience. As Christopher Morash has ably noted, a theatrical performance cannot create the 'imagined community' necessary for the realisation of a *national* consciousness precisely because the audience of any given performance form a real community united by the rigid temporal and spatial confines of a unique performance.²⁰¹ Moreover, he continues, 'it is not the theatre *per se* that constitutes a national form, but writing about the theatre which uses print culture to translate local performances into a national form'.²⁰² The review of the variety entertainment at the Lyric that appeared in *The Leader* took a contained incident of lewdness and gave it a national platform through print media. In addition, whilst the reviewer protests the content of the Lyric's variety entertainments he still attended the theatre,

²⁰⁰ *The Irish Playgoer*, 16 November 1899. This is only one contemporary source that presents this idea and it has been reiterated numerous times since.

²⁰¹ Christopher Morash, 'The Road to God Knows Where: Can Theatre be National?', in Nicholas Greene and Christopher Morash (eds), *Irish Theatre on Tour* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 104-105. Christopher Morash is reflecting here upon Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as 'imagined community'. See, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

²⁰² Morash, 'The Road to God Knows Where', p. 108.

stayed to the end, and titillates his readers by the *threat* of publishing it in the next issue. The reviewer himself was no doubt consciously aware of this irony as he claims to have only been drawn to the performance to begin with as a result of a positive review in 'the leading National and Catholic organ of opinion in Ireland'.²⁰³

Cultural nationalists were well aware of the power of modern media as a place to construct and articulate political discourse and, whilst they used the medium extensively, they were, nonetheless anxious about it.²⁰⁴ *The Leader* constantly chastises the *Freeman's Journal* for not speaking out against the music halls and providing them with advertising space in their paper even after the Archbishop of Dublin spoke out about the low moral standards of the halls. *The Leader* noted that, in failing to 'discharge their duty' of condemning the music halls, the *Freeman's Journal* 'are helping to ruin and sap some of the most honourable and characteristic traits in the national character'.²⁰⁵ *The Leader* suggests that the tendency for journalists to positively review a performance with adjectives like 'chic' and 'modern' meant that 'the standard of taste and morals which [music halls] inculcate are mixed up in the minds of our countrymen with being English, being smart, being manly, and being up-to-date'.²⁰⁶ In short, both the press and the music halls were facilitating a spread of moral degeneracy from the 'modern Babylon' of the metropole.²⁰⁷ A consistent theme in the reportage of *The*

²⁰³ *The Leader*, 1 September 1900. The paper in question is the *Freeman's Journal*.

²⁰⁴ Thomas Duddy, 'Thinking Ireland: Cultural Nationalism and the Problem of Irish Ideas', *New Hibernia Review*, 2.1 (2003), pp. 14-15.

²⁰⁵ *The Leader*, 1 September 1900.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Modern Babylon was a phrase that was regularly used to describe London. It appeared on the pages of the nationalist press and newspapers in London. Most famously it was used

Leader was that Irish men, notably young men and boys, were being corrupted by the music halls. In an extended article about the various types of ‘cads’ that attended the ‘low music hall’, particular attention was paid to the demographic of young men between the ages of seventeen and twenty from a background of Catholic education. They were depicted as individuals who, whilst raised to be highly moral and nationalist in spirit, were being corrupted by the allure of modern, imported entertainments that placed a heavy focus on female sexuality. The presence of these particular men in the music hall served as evidence that the entertainment was seen to be ‘stifling the Irish nation at its source’.²⁰⁸ Crucially, and as is often the case in *fin de siècle* literature, this crisis in Irish masculinity is explored through, and attributed to, the presence of female sexuality.²⁰⁹ Throughout the period burlesque performances, in Dublin, by women, of ‘serpentine dancing’ were advertised. These performances were modern and fashionable dances in the style of the famous Sarah Bernhardt. However, in 1908, a performer whose fame and reputation rivalled Bernhardt arrived in Dublin to perform at the Theatre Royal. Maud Allan, fresh from heavily reported performances in London that had cemented her fame, would perform her classical dances, including *The Vision of Salome*, for an Irish audience. The programme was at pains to establish the classical and artistic nature of Allan’s performance. Far from asserting the modernity of Allan’s dances, they were constantly contrasted with the figures on Greek vases. In stark contradiction her dances are also recognised as something new and uniquely modern, the

by W.T. Stead in his ground-breaking piece of journalism ‘Tribute to the Maiden Voyage of Modern Babylon’. See the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 6-10 July 1885.

²⁰⁸ *The Leader*, 29 September 1900.

²⁰⁹ Epstein-Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets*, p. 3.

artistry of which required a 'cultivated judgement' to appreciate.²¹⁰

However, the programme is also full of what were widely circulated and recognisable, freeze-frame images of a scantily clad Allan. Despite being frozen images they each emphasise the fluidity and freedom of Allan's movement. The performances were simultaneously immensely popular and scandalous. Allan's movement and minimal dress was considered to be highly erotic and yet, the introversion of Allen's gaze and facial movements suggested an eroticism that was self-pleasuring.²¹¹ The most shocking element of the performance was the contrast in Allan's free and expressive movement with the 'immobile, trunkless male head'.²¹² However, Maud Allan, both as a celebrity and in her performances as Salome was, an admittedly extreme, example of a wider tension caused by 'fin-de-siècle example of female corporeality in the entertainment industry'.²¹³ Following Allen's performance at the Theatre Royal Salome was danced at the Empire Theatre at least twice in 1909. We know this from a letter requesting that Archbishop Walsh intercede to prevent the latter performance.

Interestingly, the author of the letter is able to give a very fulsome account of the highly evocative and sexual nature of the performance because he had seen it performed at the Empire Theatre some month's prior.²¹⁴ The excitement displayed by men in the audience when they received recognition from one of the British actresses on the stage caused *The*

²¹⁰ Theatre Royal 1904-1916, Theatre Box 3, DCA.

²¹¹ Judith R. Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London* (New Haven: London, 2012), p. 65.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²¹³ Hindson, *Female Performance*, p. 201.

²¹⁴ Letters from the Laity to Archbishop Walsh, 382/4, Walsh Papers 1909, Dublin Diocesan Archive.

Leader's journalist a great deal of anxiety. The concern was that the Irish man would expend his energies on the increasingly popular stage character of a 'woman with a past' and not on the Irish woman at home. The recurring theme of contamination moving from the public to the private through prostitution is endemic to writing of this period and it is put to use by nationalist journalists to make a clear line between contact with British actresses and the contamination of the purity of Irish homes and Irish womanhood.²¹⁵ For example, the importation of women from England to perform on stage for the annual pantomime was challenged in the pages of *The Leader*. They argued that

If one objects to see an Irish girl in the garb, or for want of it, that prevails on the pantomime stage it is only blinding the devil in the dark to import English girls for the task. If there is anything objectionable about the form of earning a livelihood it is to pay money to bring your wife and children to see imported foreign girls in a position one would not like to see Irish women.²¹⁶

The challenge to the reader rests on the assumption that support for Irish industry and employment was an acknowledged duty, unless, of course, that work was morally inappropriate for Irish women.²¹⁷ In that case, men were bringing the degenerate morality of modern urban entertainments into their homes by exposing their wives and children to the pantomime. In either case, the point is clearly made that the role of Irishmen was incompatible

²¹⁵ Susan Cannon Harris, 'More than a Morbid, Unhealthy Mind: Public Health and the Playboy Riots', in Stephen Watt, Eileen Morgan, and Shakir Mustafa (eds), *A Century of Irish Drama: Widening the Stage* (Indiana, 2000), pp. 72-95.

²¹⁶ *The Leader*, 15 December 1900.

²¹⁷ For more on the role of women and Irish Industries in the Gaelic Revival see Reynolds, *Modernism*, p. 91, and McMahon, *Grand Opportunity*.

with the theatres where English imports posed dangerous risks of contagion and, ultimately, threatened the integrity of the nation itself.²¹⁸

The critiques and anxieties levelled at Dublin music hall entertainments are interesting because they bear such resemblances to anxieties displayed in England and elsewhere in Europe. However, the way in which the nationalist press was able to use the familiar language of degeneracy, contamination, and sexual immorality to make an implicit case for Irish separation from England is particularly significant. The theatre served as a venue where identities and relationships to the dual concepts of modernity and nationalism could be negotiated and mediated through a didactic relationship between audience and performer. However, the theatre, whilst the most traditional, was not alone in its provision of a space in which various identities could be performed and negotiated. A growing number of studies have utilised an understanding of performance that transcends the traditional definitions of acting from a script in a temporal and spatially defined arena and instead take the broader view that performance is 'culture in action'.²¹⁹ Indeed, it has been convincingly claimed that the use of the body is analogous to being a public performer whether on stage or not.²²⁰ There is also an increasing acknowledgement that Irish culture and identity is performative and that, in order to understand its nuances, one must analyse the ways in which these

²¹⁸ Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory*, pp. 180-189.

²¹⁹ Walsh and Brady, 'Introduction: Performance Studies and Irish Culture', p. 4.

²²⁰ Harry Garlick, *The Final Curtain: State Funerals and the Theatre of Power* (Amsterdam, 1999), p. 19.

performances operate.²²¹ The majority of scholarship dealing with performances of Irish identity concentrate on Northern Ireland from the 1970s onwards. However, since Judith Butler's seminal intervention in the early nineties a plethora of works now exists to support the idea that individuals utilise spaces in order to *perform* their identity and its relationship to the community and environment around them. Taking this into account it is interesting to consider the debates that took place about Dublin's theatres in the context of other forms and sites of identity performance. In doing so it is possible to recognise continuity in the language used to express cultural anxieties about modernity and the use of this discourse by nationalists.

The Streets

The streets and thoroughfares in Dublin at the turn of the century were crowded and dynamic places forming in many senses a theatre in which citizens staged numerous identity performances. Advanced nationalists were competing for space alongside numerous others in a culture that expected public spaces to be interactive stages. Scholarship has established that in metropolitan centres such as London and Paris there was a rich culture of urban spectatorship. Whilst it must be remembered that women were also participating in and observing these metropolitan spaces, the role of the spectator was one that was crucially portrayed as being undertaken

²²¹ Jack Santino, 'Performing Ireland: A Performative Approach to the Study of Irish Culture' in Fintan Walsh and Sara Brady (eds), *Crossroads: Performance Studies and Irish Culture* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 17.

by men.²²² This culture of observation was also prominent in Dublin as the following account from ‘The Stroller’, a caricature of the *flâneur* that acted as a pseudonym for an anonymous contributor to the *Irish Playgoer*, illustrates

During the afternoon the spirit of unrest being upon me, I sauntered down the town in the evening, and, forcing my way through the dense crowds that thronged the principal streets of their city in their quest for illuminations [for the Queen’s visit], I found myself within the walls of the Gaiety Theatre... where I was surprised to find in goodly numbers the weary and worn out sightseers, who had sought rest after their hard day’s wandering through the highly garlanded streets.²²³

Furthermore, a culture of urban spectatorship was sufficiently established that the nationalist press made use of it, both in practise and as a journalistic tool, in order to present the dangers and degradation, caused by English rule, visible on the streets of Dublin. Opening an article about ‘gutter literature’ was an invitation from the journalist ‘to take our readers round the streets of Dublin and its suburbs and ask them to look into the newsagents’ shop windows’.²²⁴ Using sarcasm that was characteristic of articles in *The Leader*, the journalist mocks what he considers to be the skin thick Irishness, poor conduct, and lacklustre political convictions of those who prided themselves as citizens of ‘the most moral country in the world’.²²⁵ The article recognises, and then instantly dismisses, the lewd and immoral tone adopted by a number of half-penny comics and their influence on the national newspapers. However, the article’s primary focus is upon

²²² For more detailed descriptions of this erasure of women from these spectral roles see, Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (New York, 1992) and Aruna d’Souza and Tom McDonough (eds), *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space and Visual Culture in Nineteenth Century Paris* (Manchester, 2006).

²²³ *The Irish Playgoer*, 12 April 1900.

²²⁴ *The Leader*, 1 September 1900.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

illustrated magazines, the questionable morality of which affords the journalist an opportunity to highlight the contaminating influence of imported British culture on Irish morality.

As we are in no position to offer an opinion as to what is technically indecent within the meaning of British law. We are aware that people cannot be made good by Act of Parliament, and if a people become filthy the law cannot make them clean. We are not by any means prepared to say that the English public is filthy, but we know that to a large portion of it nothing is humorous that is not indecent, and little interesting that is not gross...This public, as well as alleged jokes of a certain class, must have illustrations. The illustrations that they require are divided into two broad types. One panders to grossness by suggestions, the other naked and unabashed. The former, we presume, cheats the law; the latter entrenches itself behind – Art. We are not British matrons with a virtuous fit on, and have no objection whatever to the nude in Art; but when it comes to using the great name of Art to cover the pictures in the penny papers, the letterpress of which is from beginning to end saturated with grossness and which mainly circulates amongst boys – then the hypocrisy and dishonesty of the plea compels one's stomach almost to turn...

The "Island of Saints," of course, receives its own consignment, and apparently opens its arms for them. This suggests many reflections on the flabby spirit that broods over the country. If a legion of devils tripped over here from London we would not have the pluck to utter any protest, and some of our Irish national papers would doubtless instruct their representatives to write articles on the grateful and truly English manner in which they wagged their tails.²²⁶

The article goes on to suggest that the illustrated magazines, which form the focus of the article, create more widespread harm. It is implied that they are responsible for the increase in offensive language used and heard around the streets of Dublin. Additionally, the article insists that the circulation of these magazines is not confined to 'the poorer parts of the city'. The shop owners, the reader is informed, 'in many, if not in nearly all instances... are possessors of honest Irish names'. The article's final outrage however, is

²²⁶ Ibid.

reserved for the fact that the offending items are frequently displayed in amongst 'not only... strongly "national" but with Catholic periodicals'. The clear implication and anxiety here is that the offensive material was spreading through the social body to the respectable middle classes.

Another example of urban spectatorship, again taken from the pages of *The Leader*, concerns the observation of courtship around St. Stephen's Green in Dublin. The following excerpt illustrates not only the use of space by the courting couple, but also of the writer, who is observing them.

I went at half-past seven the other night, and sat for a short while on those chains which encircle that fine promenade, which in turn encircles 'Stephen's Green'. From this point of vantage, I had ample scope for the opportunity I sought, namely, of witnessing the ways of some of the younger portion of our Dublin community. This promenade, as well as its Grafton Street vicinity, is as, we all know in Dublin, the favourite resort in the evenings of our boys and girls – the rising generation – 'the youth of Ireland', as our statesmen love to call them.²²⁷

The first thing that is striking about this example is the way in which the contributor describes the city. It is anticipated that the reader will know precisely the area of Dublin referred to and the significance and use of that space. Furthermore, it is taken for granted that the gentleman in question would spend his early evening perched on the chains acting as a male spectator watching the inhabitants of the city interacting with the space and one another. The contributor goes on however to give a detailed account of the scenes he witnessed during his time as an urban voyeur. He describes a group of boys and girls exchanging crass insults between one another, a young man singing a music hall song about 'his lady', 'his reptile girl', a group of around twenty men some of whom were discussing St. Louviana

²²⁷ *The Leader*, 13 October 1900.

which was ‘not the name of a holy man, but the name of a minor English race-horse that ran in the minor English races’.²²⁸ The author of the column also witnessed a young courting couple ‘seemingly middle class, and respectable in the modern acceptance of that term’ discussing literature together.²²⁹ It becomes clear however, that the recently published English novel they were discussing contained certain chapters ‘which neither, without blushing, could read aloud in the presence of the other. Yet they discussed their subject appreciatively. And because they were lovers, and because of other reasons, ‘he approved of her taste, and she commented on his understanding’.²³⁰ This article describes a particular snapshot of urban life in Dublin at the turn of the century where advanced nationalism was beginning to claim space within and engage with. It highlights the particular anxieties over the minds and sexual purity of Irish youth and the corrupting influence of their consumption of modern literature, pastimes and music; *all* of which, tellingly enough for a nationalist journal, emanated from England. The argument made in this piece, and in so many other articles printed in *The Leader*, was that degeneracy was spreading through the youth of Ireland who should be applying themselves to the realisation of its independence. *The Leader* declared, in response to this degeneracy, that ‘to create amusements racy of the soil and in accordance with our best traditions is as sacred a duty to Irish nationality as reforming the land laws’.²³¹ Similarly, contributors to the *Shan Van Vocht*, published from 1896-1899, regularly recognised the importance of popular entertainments to shaping public

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ *The Leader*, 1 September 1900.

opinion and educating them in nationalist politics.²³² Notably, however, the discourse of overcoming degeneration, whilst put to use by *The Leader* to argue for a more nationalist spirit, was in common usage throughout metropolitan cities during the *fin de siècle*.²³³

The presence of women in public and their engagements with modern spaces and entertainments formed a locus point through which many of the anxieties of the *fin de siècle* found articulation. As we have seen, there was an acknowledgement that immorality was a feature of modern entertainment and urban existence. However, whether in the form of a courting youth, a wife, or a performer, it was the presence of women in these environments that created the danger of contamination and degeneration. The almost inevitable dangers of excessive consumption that modernity appeared to generate could only be contained by an attempt to stem the increasing presence of women in the public sphere. The presence of women in public houses is a particularly succinct example of this. The dangerous excess of alcohol were put to political use by advanced nationalists who often associated it with the Irish Parliamentary Party who, it was implied, had been infected by British morals. Moreover, from 1914, it was a discourse that was readily applied to separation women.²³⁴

What can jar more on one's finer feelings, or shock one's sense of the proper fitness of things, than, say, to see an accomplished and prepossessing and virtuous girl, who has been educated and trained

²³² Virginia Crossman, 'The *Shan Van Vocht*: Women, Republicanism, and the Commemoration of the 1798 Rebellion', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 22.3 (1998), p. 129.

²³³ Sally Ledger and Roger Lockhurst (eds), *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880-1900* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 1-25.

²³⁴ Ben Novick, 'Propaganda 1: Advanced Nationalist Propaganda and Moralistic Revolution, 1914-1918', in Joost Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 40. Separation women were women, often from the working classes, who had male relatives fighting in the British army and received an allowance from the British Government as a result.

under the watchful care of nuns, serving drink behind a counter...but a living must be made, and so her lot day after day is to listen, perforce, to the profane and obscene and ribald language with which the maudlin conversation of her half-drunken customers, of the militia –man or tinker type perhaps, is but too often interlarded. Had she been our daughter we should rather infinitely put her to domestic service.²³⁵

It is precisely because the concerns expressed in *The Leader* towards culture and modernity were so widespread that they provided such an excellent position from which to articulate nationalist politics. In this particular instance, nationalist discourse which used allegorical female figure whose bodies ‘symbolised the strength, purity and uniqueness of Irishness as well as its weakness, fragility and culpability’ were compatible with broader concerns about modern excesses.²³⁶ Nationalists were able to situate their political agenda *within* existing debates that were intelligible to the wider Irish public, whatever their politics, and the metropole. However, it is also important to note that the concerns of contamination and immorality were not expressed as a dichotomous relationship between a unified nationalist community and those outside of it. Concerns were also shown about conduct at nationalist dances and as scholarship has already established, over the co-educational nature of the Gaelic League.²³⁷ Eoin MacNeill recognised the effect that complaints about immorality could have on the success of the Gaelic League and proposed to deal harshly and uniformly with the cause of any such accusations. Upon receiving a complaint about a Gaelic League branch in Belfast ‘that dancing houses are being run in the name of League branches, and that dancing is carried on to

²³⁵ *The Leader*, 24 November 1900.

²³⁶ Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press, 1922-1937: Embodying the Nation* (New York, 2002), p. 2.

²³⁷ Pašeta, *Before the Revolution*, pp. 140-142.

an unseemly late hour by both sexes', he proposed that all dancing be prohibited within 'the League (except at a public entertainment) after 10pm or for more than one hour in the evening'.²³⁸ MacNeill was further 'informed that in some of these dancing branches, there is hardly even a pretence of studying Irish'.²³⁹ He proposed to remedy this through a system of branch inspections.²⁴⁰ What this example illustrates however is that the relative freedom afforded by the Gaelic League's mixed sex environment was enticing to individuals as much for its entertainment and courtship potential as for its capacity as a site of language renewal and nationalist education. Nationalist organisations did not operate above or in isolation of the growing world of public entertainment and its contingent anxieties during the *fin de siècle*. Additionally, it is worth highlighting that one of the most prominent nationalists of the time, Maud Gonne, was completely immersed in the evolving modernity of the *fin de siècle*.²⁴¹ Gonne had spent considerable time in Paris witnessing the European *fin de siècle* for herself.²⁴² She was an actress, who, most famously, played Cathleen ni Houlihan in Yeats' production of the same name. Gonne was to act as Yeats' muse for decades and his unrequited love for her is well documented.²⁴³ In an era when married women were expected to withdraw from public life Maud Gonne did precisely the opposite. Like Maud Allen, her beauty gave her a public profile and she used this to great effect in her performances. In

²³⁸ Letter from Eoin MacNeill to Mr O'Daly dated 12 January 1904, LA1/j/10, Eoin MacNeill Papers, UCDA.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ For the most comprehensive study of Maud Gonne's personal and political life see Margaret Ward, *Maud Gonne: Ireland's Joan of Arc* (London, 1990).

²⁴² Janis and Richard Londraville, *Too Long a sacrifice: The Letters of Maud Gonne and John Quinn* (London, 1999), pp. 19-25.

²⁴³ Ibid.

the case of Maud Gonne however, her performances were, for the most part, political rather than theatrical. She had an international understanding of Ireland's imperial relationship with Britain and, consequently was heavily involved in the agitation against the Boer War.²⁴⁴ Maud Gonne was also the only woman to ever be sworn into the IRB and police reports of the time prove that the police kept a special interest in her movements.²⁴⁵ Indeed, in November 1900 the police remarked that 'The Transvaal Committee is the greatest source of danger as it is managed and financed by the associates of Maud Gonne'.²⁴⁶ And later, in 1902, James Connolly appears in the records where it is noted that he was a 'most willing agent in carrying out the behests of Maud Gonne'.²⁴⁷ Her political activity has, in many cases, been somewhat underestimated and characterised as the work of a flighty woman who whilst useful as a figurehead did little in concrete terms. This would appear to be an unfair assessment of a woman whose nationalist work for children, in the arts, and later, fundraising for prisoners and their dependents was ceaseless. Nevertheless, it betrays the inconsistency, then as now, between representations of the iconic and symbolic roles expected of republican women and the reality of the strong and independent modern women who were so characteristic of the nationalist community at this time.

The various political protests, public demonstrations and commemorations staged by nationalists in the years prior to the Rising used public space to perform identities in an environment entirely used to urban

²⁴⁴ Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Post-Colonial, 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford, 2002), p.16.

²⁴⁵ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 106.

²⁴⁶ 21 November 1900, Précis Box 6, Crime Branch Special Reports, NAI.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 25 August 1902.

spectatorship and performative uses of the urban landscape. Indeed, in this regard the Easter Rising of 1916 was situated within a longer nationalist tradition that utilised the urban landscape. St. Stephen's Green as has often been stated, was a suicidal choice of location for trench warfare. However, in addition to being a public space around which courting youths promenaded around its perimeter it had also 'always been used as a meeting place for leading conspirators'.²⁴⁸ St. Stephen's Green was therefore a site that united the rebels of 1916 with previous commemorative marches and demonstrations by nationalists who had used the space, and public funerals that passed by it.²⁴⁹

The streets of Dublin at the turn of the century were sites of entertainment and places for the consumption of modern popular culture. They were also sites and spaces of political engagement. The often blurred lines between entertainment and political expression was so embedded that Elizabeth Bloxham, who experienced a firmly Protestant unionist upbringing, took it for granted 'that we joined in the singing of "God save the King" at the end of our concerts and temperance meetings just as we took it for granted that the local brass bands played "God save Ireland" and "a nation once again"'.²⁵⁰ Bloxham goes on to state that she could not 'recall that any of us ever felt that our religion was a barrier between us and our neighbours'.²⁵¹ Other examples emerge in archived testimonies of the period that suggest that, on some level at least, public politics was used as a source

²⁴⁸ 20 October 1896, Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Examples of these earlier commemorations, demonstrations and funerals include, but are not limited to, the 1798 centenary demonstrations, and the funeral of Daniel O'Connell.

²⁵⁰ Duplicate copy of Elizabeth Bloxham's statement to the Bureau of Military History, P31, UCDA.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

of entertainment. Dennis Johnston, again of a Protestant background, remembered how his father and uncle used to attend and disrupt the meetings of Orangemen.

At some inappropriate point of the speakers' address one or other of them would shout 'no Home Rule!' at which all then present felt impelled to applaud thus breaking the flow of eloquence from the platform. Soon after this, further annoyance, & cheers could be caused by shouts of 'No surrender' and - best of all - 'To Hell with the Pope', the last of which might even evoke counter shushes from the more civilised members of the assemblage, but which could hardly result in the expulsion of the interrupters.²⁵²

The hire of theatres and performance spaces by political organisations was not uncommon.²⁵³ This indicates two points. The first is that politicians and political figures were publically recognisable individuals.²⁵⁴ The second is that politics operated in a space that was accustomed to vociferous audience participation. In 1895 the Parnellite convention was held in the Antient Concert Rooms. John Redmond was the principal speaker. He is reported to have said 'very hard things of Catholic bishops and Priests' and, despite the large and respectable attendance, 'no one resented it'.²⁵⁵ The implicit suggestion was that had the comments caused offence it would have been displayed in the way resentment was usually displayed in theatres. Similarly, in 1896, the Rotunda was the venue selected to mark the anniversary of Robert Emmet's death. The audience were reported to have 'embraced all our Dublin would-be revolutionists'.²⁵⁶ Theatres also served as a locus for displays of nationalist sympathies. In 1898 police received

²⁵² 'There is nothing to us apart from the story of our lives, diary [of Dennis Johnson] to 1917', Dennis Johnson Collection, MS 10066/179.

²⁵³ Lot no. 200, 16 April 2011, Whytes Auction Catalogue.

²⁵⁴ For example, Francis Sheehy-Skeffington was such a prominent feature of Dublin life that he was referred to simply as 'Skeffy'. See *The Leader*, 1 January, 1900.

²⁵⁵ 8 October 1895, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

²⁵⁶ 5 March 1896, Ibid.

information that an ‘attack was contemplated on the Empire Theatre owing to the orchestra playing “God Save the Queen”’.²⁵⁷ Disturbances within the theatre caused in response to jingoism and anti-Boer sentiment on the stage was common and will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter. However, suffice it to say for now that disruptions were common enough that the theatres’ management did, and were encouraged to, censor performances in anticipation of the audiences’ reaction.²⁵⁸ *The Leader* wrote of those who objected to jingoism in the theatres with sarcastic scorn believing that the nationalist views of these amusement seekers were superficial.

[that] Irishmen should ostentatiously refuse to salute ‘God Save the King’ at band promenades or dinners, for the ‘rebellious’ reason was untenable. We found a rational reason in the fact that ‘God Save the King’ was, and still is a party cry in Ireland; its real meaning is, ‘damn the Nationalists’.²⁵⁹

The depth and brand of the protestors’ politics, nor the fact that the same protest could express different sentiments, does not affect the fact that a culture of vociferous public political engagement was expected.

Furthermore, the political landscape was so deeply contested that public spaces were used as stages for the expression of politics, the control of these spaces therefore held a great deal of importance. Nationalists, both parliamentary and advanced, used similar techniques to occupy public space in order to publicise their political message. They utilised torchlight processions, bands and the singing of nationalist songs, processions that passed through the major streets and sites connected with key moments in

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 5 January 1898.

²⁵⁸ *The Leader*, 1 September 1900.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 14 May 1910.

nationalist teleology and British rule, and finally they congregated at either large or symbolic sites such as the Phoenix Park, St. Stephen's Green, the Parnell or O'Connell monuments.²⁶⁰ It is important to note at this juncture that spectators would have understood the significance and meaning of these landmarks. Equally, the symbolism evoked by the route these procession would have also been recognized. For example, when, in 1898 a visitor requested that a Dublin taxi took him to the best-known tourist spot the driver took him straight to Thomas Street.²⁶¹ Police reports give approximate figures as to the spectatorship for nationalist demonstrations and commemorative marches. Figures of four thousand were cited in both 1896 and 1897.²⁶² However, events for the 1798 centenary drew much larger crowds. A demonstration in Phoenix Park drew five thousand participants and twelve thousand spectators, and a demonstration on August 15, 1898, a larger event than the police initially anticipated, drew a crowd of thirty thousand and passed 'nearly all places in the City associated with the memories of '98' despite the police having noticed in July 'that the Dublin people are very apathetic about the '98 movement'.²⁶³ The unexpected mass of spectators to the demonstration suggests that whilst it was a nationalist commemoration aimed at reinvigorating the contemporary movement, it also functioned as a form of entertainment and

²⁶⁰ Padhraig Higgins and Nancy Curtain both note that these forms of popular Street protest had been happening since the eighteenth century. See Padhraig Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Madison, 2010) and Nancy Curtain, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford, 1998).

²⁶¹ Kevin Whelan, 'The Memories of "the Dead"', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 15:1 (2002), p. 82. Thomas Street was where Lord Edward's was arrested and also where Robert Emmet was executed by hanging.

²⁶² The first of these events was the Irish Race Convention and the second was the return of John Redmond from America.

²⁶³ 4 August 1898, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI and 14 July 1898, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

spectacle. Focusing on the centenary in this way does overcome the divisive issue of 'enthusiasm' in the historicism of the event. There can be little doubt that it was important in shaping the terrain and discourse of nationalist politics. Equally, it had a fragile relationship with historical accuracy and was not universally welcomed.²⁶⁴ However, the centenary does unambiguously show that, at the turn of the century, political culture functioned within, and was made intelligible through public/urban spaces and spectacle. Consequently, control of those spaces became crucial. During the visit of Edward VII, for example, nationalists set fire to decorations in individual and isolated acts of arson and also removed draped cloth and bunting from nationalist houses.²⁶⁵ Through these actions they symbolically refused to accept the way in which the urban landscape had been marked as loyal to the crown and, in so doing, they had, through the absence of bunting, claimed a space in which their nationalism became visible to the public.²⁶⁶ The Dublin Metropolitan Police recorded how well attended commemorations for 1798, Robert Emmet, the Manchester Martyrs, and Charles Stuart Parnell were and it is noticeable that, as advanced nationalism and physical force politics gained in popularity at the expense of parliamentary nationalism, so the success of the Parnell anniversaries began to suffer.²⁶⁷ This further illustrates that the commemoration of deceased nationalists was not a static concern. It was a vibrant and political

²⁶⁴ Eileen Reilly, 'Who fears to Speak of '98? The Rebellion in Historical Novels, 1880-1914', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 22:3 (1998), p. 125 and R.F. Foster, 'Remembering 1798' in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 79.

²⁶⁵ Gerald (Gerry) Byrne, WS/143, NAI, pp. 1-2, and CBS Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

²⁶⁶ Senia Pašeta, 'Nationalist Responses to Two Royal Visits to Ireland, 1900 and 1903', *Irish Historical Studies*, 31:124 (1999), pp. 488-504. Also, James H. Murphy, *Abject Loyalty: Nationalism and Monarchy in Ireland During the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Washington, 2001).

²⁶⁷ Précis box 6, CBSR, NAI.

engagement with the urban cityscape dictated by the strength of contemporary political fervour towards a given strand of nationalism.

Just as the theatres in Dublin were interactive spaces where the audience, in a dynamic relationship, voiced their approval, antipathy or outright antagonism towards the actors on stage, so too were the street demonstrations and commemorations.²⁶⁸ As such, they should be viewed as political theatre. John Redmond was welcomed back from America in 1902 by a procession of three thousand people carrying around two hundred torches. They congregated to hear speeches on Upper Sackville Street, by which time the numbers had swelled to an audience of six thousand. However, the police reports note that 'during their delivery interruptions were frequent, particularly while Mr O'Brien was speaking'.²⁶⁹

Of all the commemorations that occurred prior to the Rising those that took place to mark the centennial of 1798 have been afforded recognition as the most significant.²⁷⁰ The centennial should, however, be seen in the context of reactions to the Boer War and the royal visits.²⁷¹ Furthermore, they need to be situated within a framework that recognises their place within a broader tradition of commemorations, demonstrations and memorials that emerged within a populous that was accustomed to street demonstrations to express celebration or grievance on a wide range

²⁶⁸ Dennis Condon, 'Politics and the Cinematograph: The Boer War and the Funeral of Thomas Ashe', *Field Day Review*, 4 (2008), p. 136. Condon notes a continuity of the forms of protest between the visit of Queen Victoria, Boer war and the visit of King Edward VII in and around entertainment venues.

²⁶⁹ 20 November 1902, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

²⁷⁰ For the purposes of this thesis a distinction is made between a commemoration and a public funeral. Hence, the recognised significance of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's funeral is considered elsewhere.

²⁷¹ Senia Pašeta, '1798 in 1898: The Politics of Commemoration', *The Irish Review*, 22 (1998), p. 46.

of issues. Nationalist demonstrations met with varying levels of support and enthusiasm both within and beyond the nationalist community. Different groups appropriated nationalist figures for different purposes. However, what is of greater significance is the way that, in the absence of self-governance, commemorations formed a platform from which it was possible to commune with the past and speak of the future.²⁷² For example, although Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone and the Manchester Martyrs would all play an important role in later advanced nationalist teleology of continuous generational spasms of rebellion in pursuit of an independent Ireland, there was a lack of sustained energy to commemorate their respective anniversaries annually. This, it is suggested, is because commemorations draw their significance from contemporary narratives and agendas.²⁷³ The British authorities 'often treated the ceremonies with displays of even-handedness or benign observance'.²⁷⁴ Thomas J. Brophy posits the suggestion that this was because they were viewed as 'expressions of internal partisanship and political dissent but [that the authorities] did not reckon with their cumulative impact'.²⁷⁵ The 'cumulative impact' of such demonstrations is presented in recollections of prominent advanced nationalists as one that provided community, momentum, an education in the history of Irish nationalism and an understanding of shared grievance. The commemorations provided a designated space through which the

²⁷² Terrence P. McCaughey, *Memory and Redemption: Church, Politics and Prophetic Theology in Ireland* (Basingstoke, 1993), p. 38. See also, Catherine Morris, *Alice Milligan and the Irish Cultural Revival* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 185-221.

²⁷³ Kidd and Murdoch, 'Introduction', p. 2.

²⁷⁴ Thomas J. Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence, 1847-1929', *The Irish Economic and Social Review*, 31 (2004), p. 81.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

community's collective memory could be performed and mediated to form an acceptable narrative of historical events.²⁷⁶ However, the situation of demonstrations, in particular within the context of the 1798 centenary, within a nationalist teleology that led inevitably towards independence from British rule is heavily retrospective. Furthermore, the benign observance practised by the authorities is testament to the degree to which the streets were dynamic spaces used for communicating a variety of agenda. This is not to say that the centenary did not serve as a rallying point for advanced nationalists. However, contemporary *précis* reports of the Crime Branch Special give the impression that it was 1902, rather than 1898, that stood out in the as a turning point in the popularity of commemorative demonstrations. On the 24 November 1902, a procession to Glasnevin in honour of the Manchester Martyrs was staged.²⁷⁷ The Chief Commissioner of Police reported that the procession marched from Stephen's Green to Glasnevin and 'was participated in by about 3,000 persons'.²⁷⁸ Significantly this was not the largest number of participants that had been observed in the annual demonstrations. Many which had seen larger attendance were described as failures. However, this particular demonstration involved individuals from

The Old Guard Union, the Michael Dwyer Club, Samuel McAllister Club, Red Hand of Ulster Club, Irish National Foresters' Club, Confederated Gaels, Daughters of Erin, and a section of the Boys' Brigade, also representatives of the G.A.A. Hurling and Football Clubs, and the McBride Club with a Boer flag. Nine amateur bands

²⁷⁶ Allen Feldman, 'Political Terror and the Technologies of Memory: Excuse, Sacrifice, Commodification, and Actuarial Moralities', *Radical History Review*, 85 (2003), p. 61.

²⁷⁷ Glasnevin Cemetery has been a particularly significant site for nationalists since it opened in 1832 and is the final resting place of a great number of the most prominent figures from nineteenth and twentieth century Irish politics.

²⁷⁸ 24 November 1902, *Précis* Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

including one from Dundalk accompanied the procession and a small pony trap belonging to T. Byrne, T.C. Donney-Varney, served as a funeral car, and its proprietor, who is an I.R.B. man, and a member of the Old Guard Union, acted as Chief Marshal... all the advanced nationalists and Secret Society Clubs of Dublin were represented.²⁷⁹

Whereas previously commemorative demonstrations had been populated by an 'old guard' of advanced nationalists, by 1903 participation had expanded to accommodate the new advanced nationalist groups that had emerged contemporaneously with the 1798 centenary. Significantly, these groups included members who would go on to be central to the battle for Irish Independence.

In conclusion, by challenging the hegemony of the Abbey theatre it is possible to take a much broader understanding of the ways in which nationalist spaces were created, within which nationalism was performed. Furthermore, it provides us with an understanding of the didactic relationship between audiences and performers that, whether in the theatre, or the street, was the norm and not the exception. The streets and theatres of Dublin were vibrant places of mutual exchange and spectacle where identities were constantly performed. The often-blurred lines between politics and entertainment were an endemic feature of urban, cosmopolitan life in *fin de siècle* Dublin. So too were the anxieties around gender, sexuality, and the trappings of modernity. The attitudes expressed by nationalists, therefore, towards issues of female sexuality, entertainment and masculinity, to name but a few, must be seen as operating within a broader culture that was also remonstrating with these concerns.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

Political Street Theatre and Militant Uses of Public Space, 1898-1916.

The period between the 1798 centenary and the Easter Rising marked an increasingly militant use of public space and a gradual alignment of the groups and individuals who would go on to form the body of insurgents during Easter week, 1916. It was a period that witnessed concerted anti-recruitment campaigns, protests against the visits of English monarchs, violence against property and individuals by suffragists, the Dublin lock-out, and the arming of nationalist paramilitaries, all of which took place in the context of the build-up and onset of the First World War.²⁸⁰

The Boer War inflamed public opinion. Whilst some supported, identified with, and fought in the British effort to retain their South African colony, many in Ireland objected.²⁸¹ Some families found themselves divided on the issue of the war, in a foreshadowing of 1914, while one son might offer his services to the Queen, the other would offer his to Paul Kruger.²⁸² The expression of such public feeling brought a broad church of nationalists and the wider public into contact with one another as reactions to the war were negotiated and articulated through the public spaces and buildings of Dublin. Crucially, the war also provided the catalyst for some Irish nationalists to take up arms against the British, and for others, to cultivate

²⁸⁰ This thesis provides only a very limited account of the arming of the Irish Volunteers, the Dublin Lock Out and the onset of World War One as these topics have been the focus of rigorous studies elsewhere. For further details on these events see Ben Novick, 'The Arming of Ireland: Gun-Running and the Great War, 1914-16', in Adrian Greygory and Senia Pašeta (eds), *Ireland and the Great War: "A War to Unite Us All?"* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 94-113; Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*; Yeates, *Lockout*; Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War* and Lucy McDiarmid's exploration of the 'Save the Kiddies' campaign which involved violent street altercations, McDiarmid, *The Irish Art of Controversy*, pp. 123-167.

²⁸¹ Stuart Andrews argues that the strength of public opinion in favour of the Boers was such that it may have even prompted the visit of Queen Victoria to Ireland in 1902. See Stuart Andrews, *Irish Rebellion: Protestant Polemic, 1798-1900* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 170.

²⁸² *The Irish Playgoer*, 8 February 1900.

arguments for Irish independence in the context of a global struggle with imperialism.²⁸³ The war also afforded the opportunity for a new generation of nationalists to refine their political positions and, crucially, provided a vibrant public platform upon which to express them.

The importance of anti-recruitment practises during the Boer war was such that in 1901 the Special Crime Branch of the Dublin Metropolitan Police cited the Transvaal Committee and the Major MacBride Club as the two most dangerous clubs in Dublin.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, it was the strength of feeling surrounding the Boer war that brought the movements of John MacBride and Maud Gonne under close scrutiny by the CBS and that first brought James Connolly and the Irish Socialist Republicans to the latter's attention. Similarly, large numbers of British officials who were prominent in Irish affairs throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, also had established links with South Africa and the Boer War. The plight of the Boers served as a rallying point for constitutional and advanced nationalists. Both parliamentary, and advanced nationalists were vocal in their support for the Boer claims to independent sovereignty from British rule. The former later used the South African example as a precedent for a constitutional settlement to the Irish question, while the latter made use of the Boer War to inspire nationalists who advocated armed insurrection.²⁸⁵

The précis reports of the CBS noted that the Transvaal Committee carried

²⁸³ Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Post-Colonial*, pp. 1-34. See also, Donal P. McCracken, *Forgotten Protest: Ireland and the Anglo-Boer War* (Belfast, 2003) for an authoritative study of the Irish involvement in the Boer War and Bruce Nelson, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race* (New Jersey: Woodstock, 2011), pp. 121-148.

²⁸⁴ 30 October 1901, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

²⁸⁵ Donal Lowry, "'The Boers were the beginning of the end?': The Wider Impact of the South African War' in Donal Lowry (ed.) *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester: New York, 2000), pp. 232-233.

‘on a propaganda against enlistment and distribute literature all over the country’.²⁸⁶ Similarly, the protest methods used by the Major MacBride Club were described as ‘a Celtic Literary Class held, and its members attend public meetings where they demonstrate openly, and interrupt speakers’.²⁸⁷ The Transvaal Committee also used public disruption as a form of protest as an entry in the reports for 6 November, 1900 shows. The entry also provides a keen description of the exact nature of these protests;

The scene in the Council Chamber, City Hall on 5th Nov, when John Clancy brought on his motion to confer the Freedom of the City on Kruger, baffles description; for downright blackguardism it has no parallel. Between 40 and 50 young men entered the Chamber, and when the Lord Mayor entered about 40 of them waved Boer and Green flags, and cheered defiantly for Kruger. They used scurrilous language towards the Lord Mayor, and when leaving the City Hall they hooted and hissed him and his supporters. Clancy, Leahy, Nannetti, Hutchinson and others were cheered. The disturbers are members of the Transvaal Committee, and it was discreditable to see the friendly way they were recognised by some of the council.²⁸⁸

The circulation of literature across a wide geographic area and public anti-recruitment demonstrations were taken seriously by the British government, a point that must be considered alongside the fact that the armed forces were having difficulty in finding recruits to fight in South Africa due to the poor physical condition of England’s working class. In the context of the *fin de siècle*, this appeared to provide proof of degeneration within the Empire as it was no longer able to find fit, able young men to defend it. England naturally extended its recruitment campaign to Ireland where anti-recruitment propaganda emphasised the physical and moral debility of the metropole. However, nationalists capitalised on England’s

²⁸⁶ 20 October 1901, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ 5 November 1900, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

seemingly weakened position and rarely missed an opportunity to align local politics with those of South Africa as cheers for deWet, offered alongside the singing of 'Who Fears to Speak of '98' to departing nationalists at train stations illustrates.²⁸⁹

Pro-Boer sentiment was not limited to those with declared political agendas. People across the political landscape used the streets, train stations, and places of modern entertainment such as sports clubs and theatres as sites to articulate their attitudes to the Boer war. As Donal Lowry has pointed out, during the war 'pro-Boer ballads were highly popular, and widespread rioting convinced some officials that an uprising against British rule was at hand. Rural sports teams were named after Boer heroes who were also given the freedom of Irish cities'.²⁹⁰ Discontent towards the British campaign in South Africa found its expression in the theatre in the same way dissatisfaction had always been shown in that environment.²⁹¹ The disruption was sufficient to provoke regular complaints from many theatregoers, one of whom commented that the Gaiety was 'the only place of entertainment in the city where I am sure of being allowed to forget these war troubles'.²⁹² Whilst the protests may not have been homogenised expressions of nationalism, we must nonetheless, recognise these protests as valid ways to articulate political sentiment.²⁹³

²⁸⁹ 22 October 1901, *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Donal Lowry, '"The World's No Bigger than a Kraal": The South African War and International Opinion in the First Age of Globalisation' in David Omissi and Andrew S. Thompson (eds) *The Impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke: New York, 2002), p. 279.

²⁹¹ Condon, 'Politics and the Cinematograph', p. 136.

²⁹² *The Irish Playgoer*, 8 February 1900.

²⁹³ Jason K. Knirck, *Imagining Ireland's Independence: The Debates over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921* (Plymouth, 2006).

Both the war itself, and public reactions to it, became spectacles that were consumed as commodity, and to a certain degree, entertainment, in a rapidly changing modern environment. News reel footage of the war, whether real or faked was extremely popular.²⁹⁴ Similarly, “faked’ snapshots of the [Boer] war, made from pictures taken from theatrical supers, who are made up as Boers or Englishmen as occasion demands, are much more dramatic than the real ones, and [found] ready sale’.²⁹⁵ The Boer war was also constantly drawn upon by performers in the theatre who would modify songs and scripts in order to insert references to the war for the sake of entertainment.²⁹⁶ As previously mentioned, this frequently caused a ruckus amongst the audience, so much so that it was suggested that one performer who was guilty of such adaptation ‘should get a month’s hard [labour] at least’.²⁹⁷

Reactions to the Boer War utilised established practises of exploiting public space in order to express political grievance that had been used since at least the late eighteenth century.²⁹⁸ However, the Boer War was also a modern conflict that was presented to people through the latest technologies of film and photography.²⁹⁹ It was an event that people consumed as politics, spectacle, *and* entertainment. Modern technology also brought disparate regions closer together and, as a result, Irish nationalists

²⁹⁴ Condon, ‘Politics and the Cinematograph’, pp. 132-145 and *The Leader*, 25 May 1910.

²⁹⁵ *The Irish Playgoer*, 15 March 1900.

²⁹⁶ *The Irish Playgoer*, 30 November 1899. ‘The usual uproarious chaos followed; ultimately changing into the injudicious actor being soundly (and justly, be it said) hissed for his attempted improvement of Gilbert’s perfect text.’

²⁹⁷ *The Irish Playgoer*, 5 April 1900.

²⁹⁸ Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians* and Nancy Curtain, *The United Irishmen*.

²⁹⁹ Kevin Rockett and Emer Rockett (eds), *Magic Lantern, Panorama and Moving Picture Shows in Ireland, 1786-1909*, pp. 232-237 and Dennis Condon, *Early Irish Cinema, 1895-1921* (Dublin, 2008), pp. 61-69.

were able to use the Boer War to situate their claims for sovereignty within a broader context of colonial struggle.

Advanced nationalists recalled the unpopularity of the Boer War in their anti-Recruitment efforts in Ireland during the First World War. They capitalised on the latter's unpopularity in order to situate the former within a longer tradition of England's reliance on Irish recruits rather than accept World War One as one of moral responsibility, a 'fight for small nations'. The handbills that circulated stated that the Irish cause of self-determination could not be served through enlisting. Rather, they argued that, as with previous conflicts, it was England's war and she was merely looking to her colonies for cannon fodder. One handbill proclaimed 'With the Irish England would have been beaten by Napoleon a hundred years ago and by the Boers yesterday'.³⁰⁰ The Boer War was also used to internationalise Irish experience of colonial violence as a way of further dissuading enlistment. One handbill, addressing women, stated that

What English soldiers have done in Ireland in the past they would do again if ordered to do so. They would slaughter our kith and kin and murder women and children as unhesitatingly as they hemmed in the helpless Boer women and children in those horrible concentration camps, where ten thousand little Boer children died from want and suffering.³⁰¹

In addition to placing Irish experiences of colonial violence within a modern international framework, the above quotation also introduces another key linguistic theme in the anti-recruitment propaganda circulating in Ireland during the First World War. There is a constant re-iteration that to serve in

³⁰⁰ Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

the British armed forces marked the individual as treacherous.³⁰² A handbill to 'Irish Girls' produced by Inghinidhe na hÉireann stated that, 'No man can serve two masters; no man can honestly serve Ireland and serve England. The Irishman who has chosen to wear the English uniform has chosen to serve the enemy of Ireland'.³⁰³ The advanced nationalist groups circulating anti-recruitment propaganda were, therefore, making the claim that those who served in the English ranks were no longer *Irishmen* ('England wants men but by God they will not get Irishmen'). The propaganda was allowing nationalists to refine and circulate ideas about inclusion and exclusion from the body politic in the independent nation they sought. Unlike protests against the Boer War however, pacifism was sharply denied. Handbills that circulated were clear to acknowledge the strength of Irish men and the force that they had added, over many generations, to the British armed forces claiming that 'there would be a weak British Navy and Army if the Irish did not enlist. The Irish are the real fighting element in England's armed forces'.³⁰⁴ This flyer ends with the phrase 'Irishmen be men' written in bold capital letters.³⁰⁵ In doing so, it defines Irish masculinity as a refusal to fight for the English army who, throughout anti-recruitment propaganda, are coded as weak, feminised and 'the most degraded and immoral army in Europe'.³⁰⁶ Thus, by the time of the First World War, advanced nationalists had not only harnessed the contemporary language of degeneration to articulate their grievance with British rule, they were able to mobilise it to

³⁰² Report of Desmond Fitzgerald's Sentence to Six Months Imprisonment for Seditious Speeches, P80/8, Desmond Fitzgerald Collection, UCDA.

³⁰³ Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

project an ideal of *Irish* masculinity. Concurrent with the anti-recruitment campaigns speeches by men such as Desmond Fitzgerald and Frank Aiken utilised discourses prevalent across Europe that men should be willing to fight for their country. Fitzgerald was imprisoned for making anti-recruitment speeches and one year prior to the outbreak of war Frank Aiken gave a fiery speech in which he said,

The man who has no gun and no heart to fight... asks to be spat upon. He is a cheat and a traitor. For our manhood's sake we must not deeply deplore our condition: but must sweat and starve till each has a gun and can shoot to kill. It is doubly incumbent upon every Irish Nationalist to arm and to drill, to buy a gun and to learn the use of it.³⁰⁷

Inghinidhe na hÉireann, which was founded in 1900 and was subsumed in April 1914 into Cumann na mBan were prominent groups in the creation and circulation of anti-recruitment propaganda. It is particularly interesting to assess the ways these women led organisations, used the issue of enlistment allowed for an articulation of, not only Irish masculinity, but also the type of femininity expected by Irish women. A clear example of this comes from a handbill produced by Inghinidhe na hÉireann.

Irishwomen do not sufficiently realise the power they have to help or hinder that cause of Ireland's freedom. If they did we should not see the sad sight of Irish girls walking through the streets with men wearing the uniform of Ireland's oppressor... it is the duty of every Irishwoman, who believes in the freedom of Ireland, to show her disapproval of his conduct by shunning his company.³⁰⁸

The argument being made is that it was Irishwomen's ability to grant or deny access to her sexualised body that gave her the power to affect the

³⁰⁷ Speech by Frank Aiken, P104/1456, Frank Aiken Papers, UCDA.

³⁰⁸ Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637. See also a similar example in the scrapbook of Elsie Mahaffy that calls on 'Irishwomen to shun, hate, and despise those females who keep company with [British soldiers]. Parents teach your children to hate [British soldiers] as they would a lothesome disease'. See 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074, TCDA.

numbers of men recruited into the English Army. Furthermore, whilst repeated references are made throughout the sampled handbills of women being encouraged to shun the company of those who enlist, the same can not be said of men. This suggests that women were being afforded to the role of social gatekeepers. If men who served were no longer *truly* Irish, then that would be made clear to others by their uniform and to the soldier by his social exclusion from the company of women. The power of women, it is implied in these handbills, is in their sexualised bodies, but, even more than this, the ability those bodies have to invoke, and be subject to, shame.

Women who spent time with men 'of the lowest and most depraved characters' were warned that 'you endanger your purity and honour by associating with such men, and you insult your motherland'.³⁰⁹ The prominence of women as public, political activists during this period of growing militarisation should not be underestimated. Indeed, Irish suffragists were some of the first, and most adept, at using direct action within the city to articulate their political claims.³¹⁰ Furthermore, many of the women who took part in direct action protests, such as Helena Molony, were also heavily involved in the staged pieces of political street theatre by trade unionists. Also, female activists in this period were entirely immersed in, and adept at utilising, the concerns of the wider society to articulate nationalist claims. For example, at the first meeting of Inghinidhe na hÉireann they articulated their aims as discouraging 'the reading and

³⁰⁹ Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

³¹⁰ For more detailed analysis and accounts of the Irish Suffrage Movement and its use of public space and the popular press see, Louise Ryan, *Irish Feminism and the Vote: An Anthology of the Irish Citizen Newspaper, 1912-1920* (Dublin, 1996) and Leah Levenson and Jerry H. Natterstad, *Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington: Irish Feminist* (New York, 1986).

circulation of low English literature, the singing of English songs, the attending of vulgar English entertainments as theatres and music halls, and to combat in every way English influence'.³¹¹ Furthermore, this same group 'were in the vanguard of those who perceived the importance of constructing an Irish alternative to the imported popular culture'.³¹² Consequently, Inghinidhe na hÉireann produced entertainments such as magic lantern shows depicting scenes from the Boer War that spoke to popular interests as well as communicating their nationalist politics.³¹³ The way in which these active, political and crucially, public women, navigated the line between their claims to an equal investment and participation in the national movement to their male counterparts, and the increasingly rigid allegorical ideals of Irish femininity will become increasingly important as this thesis develops.

In sum, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, the streets, whilst remaining a site where identities were performed, became increasingly militarised. Nationalist groups and organisations were not unique in their more militant use of, and claims to, public space. Events such as the Boer war, trade union disputes, and the outbreak of the First World War brought a broad range of citizens into the public arena each of whom deployed similar strategies to make their viewpoint intelligible to their urban audience. What is significant however, is the way in which nationalists responded to certain key events, such as the 1798 centenary,

³¹¹ *United Irishman*, 13 October 1900, quoted in Maria Luddy, *Women in Ireland, 1800-1918: A Documentary History* (Cork, 1995), p. 300.

³¹² Antionette Quinn, 'Cathleen ni Houlihan Writes Back: Maud Gonne and Irish National Theatre' in Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (eds), *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland* (Massachusetts, 1997), p. 42.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

outwardly at least, as an increasingly unified body. Additionally, as public spaces became more militarised so the language towards women became more restrictive indicating that anxieties around their bodies and sexuality, were increasing. However, it is important that this is not equated with women being absent from or passive within the public sphere. Far from it, often times it was the women themselves who produced the material that made use of this language and subsequently distributed it on the streets of Dublin. The level of women's activity in this regard was to become a particularly important feature in the post-Rising period.

Militarised Nationalism in the Funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa

The vast public funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in August 1915 was an event that signalled a watershed moment in the rise of advanced nationalism. The six days of public mourning utilised the existing culture of employing the urban landscape to engage the public in political performances. It was also a brazen and open display of the multitude of nationalist organisations that existed, and the increasingly militarised ethos of a number of them. The fact that the funeral was allowed to proceed unhindered by the British authorities despite the flagrant display of rifles was testament to the militaristic culture in which it took place. The funeral fit within a tradition that preceded it, most notably the burials of Daniel O'Connell, Terrence Bellew McManus, and Charles Stuart Parnell, where the Dublin streetscape was used in a highly ritualised act of remembrance that

had, as its focal point, Glasnevin cemetery.³¹⁴ Furthermore, public funerals were witnessed with increasing frequency as the battle for Irish independence became increasingly bloody during the War of Independence, and later, the Civil War. Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's funeral has, predominantly, been assessed as significant because of Patrick Pearse's stirring graveside panegyric.³¹⁵ Because of the oration by Pearse, the funeral came to be viewed as the event at which those who would lead and participate in the Rising less than a year later found themselves publicly re-baptised in the physical force tradition. However, the funeral should also be acknowledged as an event that used spaces and bodies in order to communicate and perform the inheritance of the physical force tradition by a new generation of advanced nationalists to the wider public who lined the route to Glasnevin.

As we have already seen, commemorations, demonstrations and memorials were familiar performative uses of the Dublin streets. However, the capacity of these events to galvanize support or interest beyond those immediately involved was limited. Rossa was not the first old Fenian to be repatriated for burial in Ireland. However, the funerals of other Fenians and land leaguers had been poorly attended.³¹⁶ The new generation of advanced nationalists created a funeral for O'Donovan Rossa that was a significant spectacle, garnering a great deal of public interest, that served as a vehicle for the communication of their political beliefs. The *Irish Times*, not a paper

³¹⁴ McBride, 'Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland', p. 31. McBride goes as far as to call these funerals 'messianic' in their practices.

³¹⁵ Seán Farrell Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption* (Washington, 1997), pp. 145-148.

³¹⁶ 30 November 1895 and 14 April 1896, Précis Box 6, CBSR, NAI.

one would expect to inflate the estimates of a nationalist event, speculated that 'a conservative estimate of those who actually took part in the procession gives the number [as] exceeding six thousand, and there must have been at least ten times this number lining the streets'.³¹⁷ The funeral proved to be an incredibly effective political vehicle precisely because advanced nationalist beliefs were articulated through the established symbolism and cultural norms of funerary tradition and relied on the affective quality of the ritual to make itself intelligible to observers.³¹⁸

Funerals always contain within them an element of spectacle.³¹⁹ They are the highly ritualised occasions on which grief is permitted one final public outlet before it is safely contained. In order that 'the mourning rituals can be performed to their full effect... the lines must be heard, the action choreographed'.³²⁰ A funeral is a 'theatrical space' in which 'the emotional spectacle is always enacted for an audience'.³²¹ State funerals deliberately rely on these factors to reinforce the power of the establishment.³²² In this relationship between performance and ritual the centrality of the body must be emphasised. Possessing the corporeal remains of the deceased is 'universally important to the grieving process'.³²³ In public funerals the body becomes public property and is made accessible to all through the lying in

³¹⁷ *The Irish Times*, 2 August 1915. Thomas Brophy's research suggests the number of precisionists numbered approximately 20,000 at the point at which is passed the Parnell Monument. See Thomas J. Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence, 1847-1929' (PhD Thesis, University College Dublin, 2004), p. 155.

³¹⁸ Thomas J. Brophy, 'On Church Grounds: Political Funerals and the Contest to Lead Catholic Ireland', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 95:3 (2009), p. 491.

³¹⁹ Michael Ragon, *The Space of Death: A Study of Funerary Architecture, Decoration and Urbanism* (Trans. by Alan Sherridan, Charlottesville, 1983), p. 137.

³²⁰ Gail Holst-Warhaft, *The Cue for Passion: Grief and its Political Uses* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 5.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³²² Garlick, *The Final Curtain*, p. 2.

³²³ Holst-Warhaft, *The Cue for Passion*, p. 15.

state. The body becomes the focus of a ritual that is common to the whole community.³²⁴ And being present, either as corpse, participant, or observer, 'is the basic ritual action'.³²⁵ Public funerals have the capacity to be potent political platforms precisely because of the materiality of the body. The symbolic efficiency of a body is derived from the fact that 'unlike notions such as "patriotism" or "civil society" ... a corpse can be moved around, displayed, and strategically located in specific places'.³²⁶ The annual commemorations of nationalist martyrs and figureheads discussed previously differed significantly from the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa precisely because, unlike these earlier events, the nationalists had possession of his corporeal remains. The dead body is first and foremost a material object and it was the relationship of that object to other things, spaces, and living bodies that created the highly evocative symbols that are important for the effective communication of nationalist ideology. The absence of a body in the commemorations say, for example, of the Manchester martyrs, meant that whilst they were remembered annually the catharsis of burial was impossible and so the trauma of grief was re-enacted. The presence of Rossa's body allowed for a narrative, not only of reflection, but also of progression. As we shall see, his body became symbolic of the old Fenian tradition, which, whilst valorised, was ultimately declared to be obsolete by a new generation who declared themselves ready to inherit a new political mantle.

³²⁴ Peter R. L. Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1991), p. 9.

³²⁵ Garlick, *The Final Curtain*, p. 19. Additionally, Garlick accepts that observers are also participants.

³²⁶ Katherine Verdery, 'Dead Bodies Animate the Study of Politics' in Antonius C. G. M. Robben (ed.), *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (Oxford, 2004), p. 305.

In the case of public funerals staged by Irish nationalists the mimicry of state funerals, such as those that had recently been held for Queen Victoria and King Edward VII, was the route of their theatrical subversion. Elsie Mahaffy, the daughter of Trinity College Dublin's provost, noted in her diary that

A thundering burst of disloyalty came on the first of August 1915, when O'Donovan Rossa whose body had been brought over from America was buried near the 'Liberator' in Glasnevin. Few monarchs receive such a popular ovation as the remains of this Rebel received.³²⁷

By following the prescribed ritual of the church service, procession, lying-in-state, and other smaller rituals, Irish nationalists staged a performance that ignored British sovereignty and implied that the Irish nation not only existed but that its notable figures deserved public honours to mark their passing.

The funeral of O'Donovan Rossa, and as we shall see later, Thomas Ashe, was 'political theatre, complete with motivation, conflict, actors, scenes, settings, soliloquies, and souvenirs'.³²⁸ The affective ability of the universally understood ritual of collective mourning to communicate political claims meant that funerals were critical for nationalists of various hues.³²⁹ Indeed, the Tralee Chamber of Commerce used the occasion of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral to entreat Eoin MacNeill to use his influence within the Irish Volunteers to reunite with the National Volunteers.³³⁰ In 1910, *The Leader* expressed its disdain for the 'laughable... farce' of

³²⁷ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

³²⁸ Brophy, 'On Church Grounds', p. 492.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Letter to Eoin MacNeill from the Tralee Chamber of Commerce, LA1/h/8 (6), Eoin MacNeill Collection, UCDA.

mourning for Edward VII.³³¹ The main objection was the loyalty expressed through the ‘violent epidemic’ of mourning.³³² However, the critique clearly showed the affective quality of an official period of mourning in which ‘many of the factory hands and the servant girls displayed mourning badges: never in Ireland was “loyalty” less “tony”; indeed one felt a sort of “tone” at *not* being in mourning for the King’.³³³ The period of mourning for Edward VII caused one reader of *The Leader* to reflect upon the funeral of Charles Stuart Parnell, which took place when he, the reader, was a boy nineteen years previously. Again, it is the affective quality of grief that is most fervently articulated. The ‘keen’ of ‘the people’ is placed in contrast to the false loyalty created by the ‘Regal pageant... of a corpse buried to make a public holiday’, it was the injustice and rage evoked by ‘a blighting, paralyzing grief’ that was turned to political energy that marked Parnell’s public funeral.³³⁴

It was no modish mourning. Costumiers and milliners reaped no profits from the sale of black or purple. No wordy proclamation called on the people to forego their sports and dress in sombre garb. The aspect, not the apparel, proclaimed the man, as with saddened faces each went about his work. Time and again anger and rage usurped the place of grief, and the cry of vengeance rose instead of the wail and sorrow.³³⁵

Whilst the description of Parnell’s public funeral does bear a number of similarities to those of O’Donovan Rossa’s there is a significant difference. At Parnell’s funeral ‘not a gun was heard, not a military note’.³³⁶ O’Donovan

³³¹ *The Leader*, 25 May 1910.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ *Ibid.*

³³⁴ *The Leader*, 8 October 1910. This thesis does not provide a detailed consideration of the funeral of Charles Stuart Parnell. However, an excellent article on the topic is Pauric Travers, “‘Under the Great Comedian’s Tomb’; The Funeral of Charles Stuart Parnell’ in Donal McCartney and Pauric Travers, *The Ivy Leaf: The Parnells Remembered* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 85-95.

³³⁵ *The Leader*, 8 October 1910.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

Rossa's funeral, on the other hand, was defined by its military character. Reports of the funeral emphasised the presence of rifles and the efficiency of the Irish Volunteers that was recognised as a military body, in their organisation of the proceedings. Furthermore, the funeral was referred to as a pageant and it was noted that the event was not continually sombre. The reports show quite clearly that the funeral was an assertion of the Irish Volunteers as a military body who controlled the nationalist movement and was understood as such by those who witnessed it.³³⁷ As C. S. Andrews recalled, it was at Rossa's funeral that 'the divergence between the Redmondites and the Sinn Féin Volunteers now became apparent'.³³⁸ To Andrews it was the control of both the public space and the organisation that communicated the division recalling how, 'The Irish Republican Brotherhood manipulated the occasion so that the Sinn Féiners took charge of the funeral procession, supplied the guard of honour and fired the volleys over the dead Fenian in Glasnevin'.³³⁹

The organising committee produced a souvenir programme of the O'Donovan Rossa funeral. The first edition went on sale in time for the funeral itself. A second edition, complete with photographic illustrations of the event was made available shortly afterwards. It was this programme that translated, through words and images, the theatrical display of Rossa's Dublin funeral to a wider audience and made it intelligible as a *national* event. For those who attended the funeral it served as an *aide memoir*, situating their experiences within the broader context of the six days of

³³⁷ *The Leader*, 30 August 1915, and *The Irish Times*, 2 August 1915.

³³⁸ C.S Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, (Reprint, Dublin, 2001 of orig. edn, Dublin, 1979), p. 85.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

events. It doubtless also served to inform those in attendance of what they had missed as a result of poor visual or aural vantage points.

O'Donovan Rossa's remains were taken to the Pro-Cathedral on the 27 July, 1915. The following day they were moved to the City Hall where he lay in state until the morning of the funeral on August 1.³⁴⁰ The arrangements for the funeral were placed in the charge of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Association as a result of Thomas Clarke's presidency of the same, and O'Donovan Rossa's widow's request that he should take charge of the arrangements.³⁴¹ There were a further thirteen sub-committees formed of 'a number of prominent Irish-Irelanders' who had been 'invited to associate themselves with the work in hand'.³⁴² Whilst the individual committees met daily they only reported their progress bi-weekly. As the organisers were only given two weeks to arrange the funeral the sub-committees could only have met a maximum of two times suggesting they operated in relative autonomy from one another. The programme, written, as it was, by those involved in the organisation of the funeral, gives the clearest statement available of what those in charge of arrangements sought to communicate. There are no references to the state funerals of either Queen Victoria or King Edward VII that would have been familiar to many in Ireland, supporting the idea that it was not conceived as mimicry. Rather, it is the clarification that Rossa received the honours of a state funeral from those who had kept the

³⁴⁰ The funeral procession from the City Hall to Glasnevin Cemetery took the following route; City Hall, Dame Street, George's Street, Aungier Street, York Street, Stephen's Green West and North, Grafton Street, Nassau Street, College Green, Westmoreland Street, Sackville Street, Parnell Square, North Frederick Street, Blessington Street, Berkeley Road, North Circular Road, Phibsborough Road, Finglas Road, and, finally, Glasnevin Cemetery.

³⁴¹ The Wolfe Tone Memorial Association had also been prominent in arrangements for the 1798 centenary.

³⁴² 'Diarmuid Ó Donnobáin Rosa Souvenir of Public Funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery', CD 316/2. Contemporary Documents Collection.

faith of an independent Irish state and who were yet prepared to fight for its recognition. The Pro-Cathedral was described as a 'stately church', whilst the Guard of Honour was styled as 'four Irish Volunteers standing like silent, soldier sentinels at the bier of a dead king'.³⁴³ Equally, the occasion of the solemn Requiem Mass was not portrayed as a moment to reflect upon the death of Rossa, and with him the Fenian struggle of a previous generation. Instead, it was described as a moment in which those present were able to reaffirm their commitment to physical force nationalism.³⁴⁴

Many of those who gathered either to see O'Donovan Rossa lying in state or the funeral procession pass through the main streets of Dublin would have been unfamiliar with the details of his life. The programme, with contributions from leading advanced nationalists including Arthur Griffith, Patrick Pearse, James Connolly, Thomas MacDonagh, and Terrence MacSwiney was, therefore, a critical platform from which O'Donovan Rossa's life was presented to mourners. Most significant were the ways in which O'Donovan Rossa's pedigree as an Irish Fenian rebel was contrasted to the past actions of parliamentary nationalists, and, the way this was used to physically and ideologically ostracize parliamentary nationalists from claims to O'Donovan Rossa's legacy. Arthur Griffith made it clear that the Irish Parliamentary Party had been prepared to sacrifice the lives of millions of Irish people during the famine in order to achieve personal advancement within, and in collusion with, the colonial power structure.³⁴⁵ Furthermore, lest anybody should argue that it was an engagement with English

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

parliamentary politics that had succeeded in bringing about the popular, and long awaited, reforms to land ownership and tenants rights, W.J. Ryan reminds them that; 'Whig or Tory the game is played under the same rules... it was during Gladstone's first premiership that O'Donovan Rossa endured the worst tortures of his prison life'.³⁴⁶ Incredibly, O'Donovan Rossa's 'fortitude' in prison is held up as a reason for Gladstone's change of policy towards Ireland.³⁴⁷ The message was clear, collusion with a colonial government, regardless of the party or the era would always act against the Irish interest. Such statements were clearly an allusion to the failure of parliamentarians to secure Home Rule for Ireland, made at a time when the Volunteers had acrimoniously split following Redmond's call for young Irishmen to 'fight for small nations'. The accusations levelled at Home Rulers were articulated in tandem with claims that the significant political gains of the previous generations had been obtained through physical force. Even more far-fetched is the claim the Daniel O'Connell was himself on the precipice of urging his followers to pursue an aggressive campaign of physical force, the threat of which led to an active policy of famine by the British cabinet.³⁴⁸ The advanced nationalist press of the time was full of accusations lobbied against those who chose to engage with the colonial system of governance in the hope of securing a more equitable relationship between Ireland and England. What is particularly interesting however, is the way in which in this instance, advanced nationalists were able to use a public funeral, and the narrative of the dead man's life, in order to

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

communicate and promote their own ideology, narrative of Irish history, and primacy over other nationalist groups. The selective remembering of O'Donovan Rossa's life was important because it created a narrative that emphasised a temporal continuity that legitimised advanced nationalist understandings of Irish identity and politics.³⁴⁹ Pearse opened his 'character study' of O'Donovan Rossa by explaining that

Rossa was not the greatest man of the Fenian generation, but he was its most typical man. He was the man that to the masses of his countrymen then and since stood most starkly and plainly for the Fenian idea... Rossa held a unique place in the hearts of Irish men and women.³⁵⁰

The claim Pearse made was that O'Donovan Rossa, and by proxy, all those who spoke posthumously about him, were agents of the people articulating the one true voice of popular sentiment in Ireland. After asserting O'Donovan Rossa's ardent desire that 'not only would he have Ireland free, but he would have Ireland Gaelic', Pearse goes on to inform the reader that Rossa 'distrusted' Parnell and Michael Davitt stating 'he always regarded [home rulers] as either foolish or dishonest'.³⁵¹ This is despite reported claims that 'before his death O'Donovan Rossa reconciled with the British and condemned the Germans'.³⁵² Regardless of the truth of Rossa's politics during the last years of his life in exile, the organisers emphasised the constancy of his Fenian ideals. Indeed, Rossa became the body upon which

³⁴⁹ Gillis, 'Memory and Identity', p. 3.

³⁵⁰ Diarmuid Ó Donnobáin *Rosa Souvenir of Public Funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery*, CD 316/2. Contemporary Documents Collection.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Paige Reynolds, 'Modernist Martyrdom: The Funerals of Terence MacSwiney', *Modernism/Modernity*, 9:4 (2002), p. 536.

the abstract ideals of 'faith' and 'constancy' were given a tangible form to be emulated.³⁵³

Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's stoic resilience to his imprisonment and the treatment he received whilst in prison is a constant and recurring theme throughout the forty-two-page programme of his funeral. However, the crucial element to all of the descriptions of Rossa was that he remained 'unconquered' and 'unbroken'.³⁵⁴ The violence imposed on him by the British was corporeal. He was said to have withstood it with manly fortitude and in so doing he ensured that his spirit remained untouched by the attempts of the colonial power to subdue and pacify him. In the public funeral his body, and its passing through the physical spaces of Dublin, afforded people the chance not to mourn but to allocate a focal point that, through a mutual Catholic understanding of the soul, to remark upon his unbroken spirit. Similarly, national identity is inherently defined by space. By moving Rossa's body through the streets of the capital and passing landmarks of mutually recognised nationalist significance the organisers were able to subvert colonial rule by remapping the city. The purity of his commitment to Fenianism, physical force and Irish independence was used by the advanced nationalists who would go on to lead the Easter Rising, to communicate an understanding of Irish masculinity which disregarded the body in favour of a higher spiritual ideal,

When the body [politic] grew corrupt Ireland shrivelled in men's minds from a spiritual force and a National entity to a fragment of Empire – an Area. Again, the Body Politic has healed and awakens to consciousness of that soul within it which the Political Atheist

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Diarmuid Ó Donnobáin *Rosa Souvenir of Public Funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery*, CD 316/2, Contemporary Documents Collection.

denies. No man will watch the body of O'Donovan Rossa pass to its tomb without remembering that the strength of an Empire was baffled when it sought to subdue this man whose spirit was the free spirit of the Irish Nation.³⁵⁵

It is vital to bear in mind that in 1915 the rhetoric of idealised masculinity that would offer itself in the service of the nation was utilised across the continent.³⁵⁶ Whilst the First World War had already gone on longer than many had imagined the horrors of the major battles such as the Somme still lay ahead. And, whilst unpopular with some nationalists, Redmond's position was no different from the majority of European statesmen who expected a brief war.³⁵⁷ Conscription had not yet been introduced in Britain but the rhetoric of duty and masculine valour, along with social stigma of not joining up, were still relied upon to find conscripts for the front. It is particularly interesting to note in the descriptions of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral that those who were often excluded from the advanced nationalist community, namely those fighting in the British army, were included because they might fight for Ireland.

And the Khaki-clad soldier who now stands at the salute! However the memories awakened may have brought shame to his breast his face shows none of it – just a look of pride and thanksgiving. Even he will treasure that last impression until mayhap his blood flows out on a European battlefield, or a hill in Gallipoli, or who knows! Old memories reawakened are mighty force, and the Irish heart that beats under the khaki tunic may yet give its blood for Ireland.³⁵⁸

The programme relayed this, possibly imaginary, scene to a far wider audience than could ever possibly have witnessed it because it situated the

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 107-133.

³⁵⁷ Knirck, *Imagining Ireland's Independence*, p. 36.

³⁵⁸ Diarmuid Ó Donnobáin Rosa Souvenir of Public Funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery, CD 316/2, Contemporary Documents Collection.

concerns of nationalists within a more widely understood discourse of masculinity that had emerged across Europe in the decade or so prior to the outbreak of war. The inclusion of men fighting for the British within the descriptions of those who paid their respects to O'Donovan Rossa only serves to further emasculate the men of the National Volunteers, and, as a result, make their political outlook appear illegitimate and weak. Whilst the first half of the programme referred to the grievances of a previous generation in order to weaken the political argument for home rule, the second half described the ways in which organisers physically represented the weakening case for Home Rule. Despite Redmond's call to fight for small nations, the national volunteers in attendance were conspicuously not fighting on the western front. Furthermore, despite claims from the Irish Volunteers that the National Volunteers had made off with a large number of the rifles brought into Howth in 1914, the latter marched unarmed in the funeral procession. Furthermore, whilst they were allowed to participate they were relegated to the very back of the procession, furthest away from the cortege and its representation of power, authority and legitimate inheritance to the Fenian political mantle. The implication is that advanced nationalists had more in common with a man who was willing to risk his life in battle, even if he was, in the opinion of the organisers misguidedly, fighting in the ranks of the British Army, than a parliamentary nationalist. Examples such as those were further reiterated during the formal proceedings when, during the panegyric, Father O'Flanagan stated that 'all over Europe the red blood of fighting men was being poured out on the altar of patriotism, Irishmen also should be willing to risk danger, trials, and

sacrifices for the love of Ireland'.³⁵⁹ The comparison between those fighting on the western front and those who would take up arms in the cause of Irish independence was used by O'Flanagan to legitimise the right to Ireland's sovereignty and the use of arms to achieve this. Furthermore, the legitimacy of this action is supported by the projected approval of Rossa whose visible body represented the tradition of physical force. His body was visible not only to those listening to the panegyric but also to those reading about it in the programme as a photo of O'Flanagan's oration was placed alongside a description of the event. In the examples outlined above the use of force was not only acceptable; it was the hallmark of masculinity and, as such, the obligation of the modern man. Throughout Europe this discourse of masculinity had reached pathological levels.³⁶⁰ However, whilst the Volunteers joined the organisation to realise themselves as citizens and men this realisation could only be sustained if it was supported by the corollary of the heroic, subordinate woman. The organising committee ensured that members of Cumann na mBan and Inghinidhe na hÉireann were placed at the back of the procession, furthest from the cortege. And, in the souvenir publication, women became noticeably more absent from the photographs of the funeral arrangements as the book progressed. This had the effect of communicating to a wider audience that, as the body of O'Donovan Rossa moved ever more into the public space, so possession of his body was taken over by the armed men of the Irish Volunteers and away from the symbolic female guardianship of his widow and daughter. Despite this, the reality was

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Margaret Ward, 'Gender: Gendering the Irish Revolution' in Joost Augusteyn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 172.

more complex. Some men were unwilling to exclude women and, in a foreshadowing of the Easter Rising, took it upon themselves to accommodate them. For example, Thomas MacDonagh specifically made space for Elizabeth Bloxham and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington at the graveside so that they would be better able to hear Pearse's oration.³⁶¹

The funeral of O'Donovan Rossa has often been singled out as marking a moment of departure in the development of advanced nationalism. Here, it has been argued that this was indeed the case. However, the significance of the funeral extended considerably beyond the impact of Pearse's famous oration. It marked a moment in which advanced nationalists relied upon the public's ability to read urban spectacle and the use of space to narrate the ascendancy of physical force nationalism. This was achieved, not only by claiming prominent spaces within the cityscape for an extended period of time but also, by relegating parliamentary nationalists to a position furthest away from the body of O'Donovan Rossa. Furthermore, the organisers of the funeral recognised, and were able to harness, tools of the modern entertainment industry to produce a programme of the day's events. The wide distribution of which, framed the use of space and the body in the streets of Dublin as a *national* event.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that, in order to better understand the development of advanced nationalism, both in its rhetoric and performative strategies,

³⁶¹ Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women, 1900-1922* (Dublin, 2010), p. 109.

one must look beyond the high modernism of the Abbey theatre and the cultural revival. Instead, it is more fruitful to consider the cosmopolitan milieu of *fin de siècle* Dublin. By doing so, it is possible to place the development of advanced nationalism within the context of a rapidly changing world where identity was a daily performance contributing towards the endless spectacle that comprised the urban cityscape. Furthermore, by shifting the focus away from a more readily identifiable cultural nationalism, it is possible to more fully understand the similarities between how advanced nationalists articulated their claims for self-legislature and more widely held anxieties about the modern age. Moreover, as the twentieth century got underway, Irish society, in keeping with a European wide trend, became more militarised. During this moment, advanced nationalists came into their own deploying well-rehearsed performative strategies that made active use of the city in order to show physical force nationalism in the ascendance. As the following chapter will demonstrate however, when the moment came for armed insurrection, the performative strategies discussed in this chapter failed them and the Rising was ultimately unintelligible to its audience.

2

Performance and Republicanism in the Easter Rising

On Easter Monday 1916 the General Post Office on Sackville Street, in Dublin, was seized by members of the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan.³⁶² At the same time other positions, more symbolic than strategic, throughout the city were seized and barricaded by other small battalions of the Volunteers and ICA, and were joined by members of Cumann na mBan.³⁶³ This marked the start of the Easter Rising, an event that was to have a fundamental effect on the course of Irish history and take a central place within the narrative of Irish nationalism and national identity.

This chapter seeks to interrogate the performative nature of the Rising and the response of onlookers. Recent studies, aided by the availability of the Bureau of Military Witness Statements, have emphasised the extent to which confusion characterised individual experiences of the Rising.³⁶⁴ This chapter supports these assessments but further argues that this confusion was, in neither cause nor effect, limited to logistical and

³⁶² Sackville Street is now O'Connell Street.

³⁶³ Whilst the Cumann na mBan took part in the Rising alongside their male counterparts they never seized or defended a building as an individual fighting force.

³⁶⁴ See McGarry, *The Rising*, Wills, *Dublin 1916* and Annie Ryan, *Witnesses: Inside the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2005).

practical concerns. It will be shown that competing interpretations of the Republic rebels were fighting to secure, made it impossible to coherently perform the rebellion thereby ensuring that confusion was an endemic feature of the Rising.

From the outset the rebels were fighting with diminished numbers, a fact that has often been attributed to the Countermanding order.³⁶⁵ As a result as Tom Garvin has noted, 'the actual Rising went off at half-cock in 1916, in the time-honoured fashion of Irish Risings' and 'what had been intended as a co-ordinated surprise attack lost all semblance of order'.³⁶⁶ Witnesses later recalled that 'the use of the public press... was an extraordinary way to call off a mobilisation, particularly as the Volunteers had a very efficient mobilisation system'.³⁶⁷ Whether or not the efficiency of the Volunteers system was up to the challenge of mobilising on the scale required for a successful Rising is perhaps doubtful. Equally, there is no way of knowing the number of men who would have turned out even without the effect of the countermanding order. However, what is clear from numerous statements is that the order 'gave rise to rumours and considerable uneasiness'.³⁶⁸

The legacy of blame attributed to Eoin MacNeill for the failure of the Easter Rising has been gradually but consistently challenged by academic

³⁶⁵ The counter-manding order was issued by Eoin MacNeill (head of the Irish Volunteers), and published in the Sunday edition of the *Irish Independent*. It canceled all manoeuvres for that day, which had been originally intended to mark the start of the Rising.

³⁶⁶ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 112 and Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 28.

³⁶⁷ Ignatius Callender, WS/923, NAI, p. 3.

³⁶⁸ Michael O'Flanagan, WS/800, NAI, p. 13.

scholarship.³⁶⁹ MacNeill had been slowly losing control of the Volunteer Executive to the small group of republican nationalists who eventually comprised the signatories of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. Professor Liam O'Briain recalled how his colleague, O'Neill, would frequently 'absent himself from executive meetings, to slip back into the 10th century and... leave the chairmanship of the weekly meetings to [Patrick] Pearse'.³⁷⁰ Consequently, decisions were frequently made in his absence. Having effectively ostracised MacNeill from anything other than symbolic control of the organisation this elite few set about radicalising the Volunteers and preparing for armed insurrection.³⁷¹ The countermanding order was a last ditch effort to prevent what MacNeill perceived to be a futile waste of life nominally carried out with his sanction. His hope that his statement in the *Irish Independent* would succeed in preventing the Rising suggests that he was unaware of how far his authority over the Volunteers had diminished. The degree of control wielded by the IRB also explains why confusion was so widespread at all levels of the Volunteer organisation.³⁷² The secret and cellular structure of the IRB meant that some individuals knew from as early as 1911 'that there would be a "Rising"', and others were told at Centres, not only in Ireland, but also in Glasgow, from as early as 1914, that "an attempt would be made at an insurrection in Ireland at an

³⁶⁹ F.X. Martin, 'Eoin MacNeill and the Easter Rising: Preparations' in F.X. Martin (ed.), *The Easter Rising, 1916 and the University College Dublin* (Dublin, 1966), pp. 3-33 and Owen Dudley Edwards and Fergus Pyle (eds), *1916: The Easter Rising* (London, 1968).

³⁷⁰ Professor Liam O'Briain, WS/3, NAI, p. 1.

³⁷¹ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 106; F.X. Martin, '1916 – Revolution or Evolution?' in F.X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising; Dublin 1916* (London, 1967), p. 207 and Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation*, pp. 222-223.

³⁷² Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question*, p. 150.

early date or as soon as the opportunity became favourable”³⁷³ However, it also meant that ‘[t]he Rising was not planned, organised, or even discussed by the executive of the Volunteers’.³⁷⁴ Even for those within the brotherhood their membership was often inactive.³⁷⁵ In his candid summation of his time within the IRB. Seamus Murphy suggested ‘that the real work was done by two or three men... The idea was not to have... active members of the I.R.B., but to be able to say that there were so many of the I.R.B. in the Volunteer movement’.³⁷⁶

Despite the veil of secrecy that surrounded the exact plans for the Rising rumours amongst the rank and file of the Volunteers were rife. Many witness statements note that by the end of Holy Week 1916 there was a growing awareness ‘that something unusual was about to take place’.³⁷⁷ Instructions to seek confession, or orders to mobilise with full medical equipment, added to the suspicions of some Volunteers that a full-scale operation was imminent.³⁷⁸ However, despite the rumours some individuals failed to grasp the full extent of the situation. One Volunteer even recalled how he thought that the rumours were ‘spread deliberately by the Volunteer chiefs to make the men make a big effort to complete their equipment’ for the Easter Sunday parade where a prize was due to be given to the best equipped company.³⁷⁹ Even as late as Easter Monday morning Louise Gavan Duffy remained nonchalant. When Maggie Irvine arrived at their shared

³⁷³ Gerald (Gerry) Byrne, WS/143, p. 1; George Irvine, WS/265, NAI, p. 2; Michael O’Flanagan, WS/800, p. 3.

³⁷⁴ Sean Fitzgibbon, WS/130, NAI, p. 1.

³⁷⁵ John McDonagh, WS/219, NAI, p. 3.

³⁷⁶ Mr Seamus Murphy, WS/1756, NAI, p. 9.

³⁷⁷ Sean Byrne, WS/422, NAI, p. 4.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., Laurence O’Brien, WS/252, NAI, p. 4.

³⁷⁹ Professor Liam O’Briain, WS/7, NAI, pp. 1-2.

‘digs’ to tell her the Rising had started Gavin Duffy recalled saying to Irvine, ‘When you have been in Cumann na mBan as long as I have, you won’t be frightened by rumours’.³⁸⁰ Gavin Duffy was ‘tired of hearing rumours’ and thought Irvine was getting ‘unduly excited about nothing’.³⁸¹ That somebody as politically active as Gavan Duffy could be so glib about the prospect of a Rising highlights how prevalent rumours of insurrection were at the time.

Regardless of the circumstances and blame for the delay of the Rising the effect was confusion at all levels among republicans willing to fight. Once the countermanding order had been issued ‘there was a great deal of confusion among the Volunteer leaders’.³⁸² Some of the commandants went to the Volunteer Hall, whilst others went to St. Enda’s seeking information from Pearse, only to find that nobody there knew where he was.³⁸³ Meanwhile, a number of other prominent Volunteers went ‘house to house in search of information’.³⁸⁴

Once definitive action had been decided upon for Easter Monday the situation became compounded by further confusion. Despite the rumours and activities of Easter Sunday, Volunteer leaders found that they had to contend not only with mobilising at extremely short notice but also with the fact that many Volunteers, unaware of the gravity of the burgeoning situation, had taken the opportunity afforded by the Bank Holiday to leave the city.³⁸⁵ This departure from the city, often to the nearby Fairyhouse Races, was a source of great disappointment to those attempting to mobilise

³⁸⁰ Miss Louise Gavin Duffy, WS/216, p. 4.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Miss Madge Daly, WS/209, NAI, p. 2.

³⁸³ Mr Eamonn Bulfin, WS/497, NAI, p. 5.

³⁸⁴ Dr Richard Hayes, WS/97, NAI, p. 2.

³⁸⁵ Joseph O’Byrne, WS/160, NAI, p. 2.

their men.³⁸⁶ However, a number of the absent Volunteers joined their companies on their return, a sign both of bravery and commitment 'for they certainly knew they were going into battle'.³⁸⁷ James O'Connor was one such Volunteer who joined his battalion later; 'On Easter Monday I got up and went to the races at Fairyhouse. While at the Races I heard that the Rising had started in Dublin. It was the general talk at the Races that evening. I came home on Tuesday, bringing my shotgun and cartridges, I joined the Battn.'³⁸⁸ O'Connor appears not to have experienced a pressing sense of urgency to return from the races and join his battalion. The reason for this is unclear from his statement and was perhaps dictated by the availability of transport more than anything. However, it does highlight the fact that the Volunteers were a citizen militia and not an enlisted army. The organisation was not, nor did many of the men enrolled expect it to be, an active force engaged in open battle for Irish Independence.³⁸⁹ Whether to act upon a mobilisation order was, ultimately, a matter of choice for the individual. For example, despite receiving his mobilisation order Joseph McDonough continued on his journey to purchase two tickets for the Old Coliseum Theatre for that evening, he then proceeded home for his arms and equipment, in order to join his battalion.³⁹⁰ McDonough's statement

³⁸⁶ Cornelius O'Donovan, A.R.Csc, I, B agrsc, WS/1750, NAI, p. 5. See also, Statement by Joseph O'Connor to the precursor of the Bureau of Military History dated April 1934, MS 10,915/1, NLI.

³⁸⁷ Cornelius O'Donovan, A.R.Csc, I, B agrsc, WS/1750, p. 5.

³⁸⁸ Mr James O'Connor, WS/142, NAI, p. 2.

³⁸⁹ Fearghal McGarry, *Rebels: Voices from the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2011), p. 62.

³⁹⁰ Mr Joseph McDonagh, WS/1082, NAI, p. 2.

indicates that, at the time, he thought he would be able to attend the theatre that evening.³⁹¹

The frustration of Company and Battalion leaders was far from one sided and many rank and file Volunteers tried desperately to find their mobilisation points.³⁹² Mobilisation orders frequently arrived later than the time of assembly noted, if at all, to the homes of Volunteers adding considerably to the degree of confusion experienced.³⁹³ Passers by were sometimes able to inform Volunteers who had missed their company's mobilisation of the whereabouts of their compatriots, as in the case of the woman who informed James Burke 'they are gone down Cork St'.³⁹⁴ Even as Andrew McDonnell was attempting to find his mobilisation point he 'was still convinced [he] was going on a manoeuvre, and [was] sure most of [his] comrades had the same idea'.³⁹⁵ As they were entering the city they met large numbers of civilians already fleeing, ironically informing them 'not to go near the G.P.O. as there was shooting there'.³⁹⁶ He describes the 'amusement of passersby' as they received new orders to march to Liberty Hall before finally, and inexplicably, arriving at 144 Brunswick Street 'to find men and arms all over the place and plenty of confusion'.³⁹⁷ These interactions between Volunteers and the city's inhabitants in the early hours of the Rising show a failure, on both sides, to fully comprehend the situation and the actions of those involved. This was to become more pronounced as

³⁹¹ The theatre was destroyed during the Rising.

³⁹² Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 28.

³⁹³ James J. Burke, WS/1758, NAI, p. 3.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Andrew McDonnell, WS/1768, NAI, p. 5.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

the Rising developed and the reactions of civilians to the Rising will form a major focus of the analysis in this chapter.

For the women who would eventually play an active part in the Rising mobilisation was even more fraught and haphazard and it is 'an indication of the women's determination to fight that so many did eventually take part'.³⁹⁸ For those fortunate enough to be in the Irish Citizen Army or attached to Eamonn Ceannt's battalion (eventually active in the South Dublin Union area) mobilisation appears to have followed much the same pattern as their male counterparts.³⁹⁹ However, for other women, their involvement relied more heavily on their own initiative. Whether alone or as a group women moved around the city searching for information and volunteering their services at various occupied locations.⁴⁰⁰ In addition to the problems caused to the mobilisation of women as a result of the countermanding order, many, having tenaciously found their way to various outposts and occupied spaces, were sent home by the men in charge, being informed that their services would not be required. It appears that the common view in the early hours of the Rising was that it was no place for a woman. Frances Downey's diary gives a good impression of the confusion and upset experienced by members of Cumann na mBan in the opening hours of the Rising. She wrote, 'Why have I not been mobilised [?] My place is with the Volunteers and I have not been sent for'.⁴⁰¹ The problems experienced by women were, by and large, resolved by the evening of Easter

³⁹⁸ Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (2nd edn, London, 1995), p. 109.

³⁹⁹ Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2007), pp. 58-59.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. and Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 109.

⁴⁰¹ Diary of Frances Downey 22-27 April 1916, MS 10066/193, Dennis Johnson Collection, TCDA.

Monday, following the bold move of two members of Cumann na mBan who managed to reach Clarke, Connolly and Pearse in the GPO and explain the situation faced by women.⁴⁰² Following this order, the only commandant to still refuse to accept the services of women was Eamon deValera. The circumstances faced by women during the first day of the Rising however, points not only to the problems of communication between occupied spaces, which only became more pronounced as the fighting continued, but also to the lack of uniformity within the new Republic (which, it should be remembered, had explicitly emancipated women), and the relative autonomy of individual Commandants and Company leaders.

This autonomy was largely due to the failure to establish sound communication channels between the occupied buildings and various outposts. Signallers attempted to make contact with the Union garrison but failed to achieve contact even once.⁴⁰³ Likewise, attempts to maintain communication with other areas of the country also failed. Thomas Kent, Commandant of the Galtree Battalion, waited in vain for an 'official communication' only to find out later 'that the man who was entrusted to deliver the message never did so'.⁴⁰⁴ To a certain degree it appears that the leaders had pre-empted the failure of communication that plagued the Rising. It had been laid down 'that all sections of a company were to be so organised as to be self-contained fighting units, that is to say that if they got isolated they would be able to look after themselves in every way'.⁴⁰⁵ Had full mobilisation been achieved then doubtless this would have at least

⁴⁰² Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 110.

⁴⁰³ Laurence O'Brien, WS/252, p. 6.

⁴⁰⁴ William Kent, WS/75, NAI, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁵ Simon Donnelly, WS/433, NAI, p. 7.

overcome some of the problems and confusion endured due to failed communication between the various outposts. One of the few successful pieces of communication to have been circulated widely were the various bulletins and pronouncements made by Patrick Pearse during the week. They made for excellent propaganda, making grand claims such as;

The Republican forces are everywhere fighting with splendid gallantry. The populace of Dublin are plainly with the republic, and officers and men are everywhere cheered as they march through the streets. The whole centre of the city is in the hands of the Republic, whose flag flies from the G.P.O...Communication with the Country is largely cut, but reports to hand show that the country is rising, and bodies of men from Kildare and Fingall have already reported in Dublin.⁴⁰⁶

However, such misleading information at a time when other news sources were almost impossible to come by only served to add to the confusion and further ignite the rumours that were circulating. Throughout the Rising women and priests acted as couriers providing the most effective, and often times only, method of communication.⁴⁰⁷ As a result of their sex and religious duties respectively they were able to move relatively freely around the city and, as such, had probably a clearer and more holistic idea of the situation than most. This freedom also meant they were in a position to carry notes, or in less fortunate circumstances, notification of death, from occupied buildings to relatives.⁴⁰⁸

It is clear that the failure to communicate effectively caused a great deal of confusion amongst the rebels. However, such examples tell us little about the interplay between the insurgents and the citizens watching the

⁴⁰⁶ Irish War News, P88/1, James Ryan Collection, UCDA.

⁴⁰⁷ Thomas J Meldon, WS/134, NAI, p. 6; Joseph McDonagh, WS/1082, p. 5; Mrs Malone (Nee Brighid Breathnach), WS/617, NAI, p. 3.

⁴⁰⁸ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 76.

Rising unfold. To gain a better understanding of the mutual confusion, affecting both combatants and onlookers, it is necessary to move beyond the internal narratives of the mobilisation and organisation of the Rising and consider the effects of the fighting on the streets of Dublin. To that end, this chapter will investigate the performative strategies of the rebels. It will argue that the Rising was ultimately an unintelligible performance because of the multitude of interpretations apparent among the rebels themselves about citizenship in the republic the proclamation had decreed. The chapter will go on to illustrate that the civilians in Dublin initially engaged with the Rising as political street theatre and a spectacle. However, as the Rising developed it marked such a departure from the contemporary culture of political performance that it became ultimately unintelligible to these civilians. Consequently, civilian experiences of the Rising were characterised by the disorientating effect of a rapidly changing urban cityscape, concerns over food provision, and a gradual retreat from the streets into the relative safety of domestic spaces. As a result, the interaction between the insurgents and civilians was limited until the surrender of the former. The privations and dangers that had characterised civilian experiences of the Rising did not cease entirely with the surrender of the rebels. However, the surrender marked the point at which civilians once more took to the streets to assess the damage wrought on the city's main thoroughfares, and to re-negotiate the spaces that formed an integral part of public citizenship.

The Rebels: The Easter Rising as Performance

When J. Whitbread, the manager of the Queen's theatre, first saw a copy of the proclamation he assumed it was an advertisement for a new play that was currently in rehearsal.⁴⁰⁹ A number of the signatories were known thespians, and buildings such as Liberty Hall had often been used to stage theatre productions. He was not alone in this assumption and there are several anecdotes that suggest bystanders understood and recognised the Rising as a performance.⁴¹⁰ The claim that the Rising should be understood in this way is not unique. Ben Levitas states that 'the theatre of war could resign metaphor, and in the Rising, be staged as production: part mystery play, part melodrama, part avant-garde provocation'.⁴¹¹ Roche acknowledges that the Rising was 'constructed along theatrical lines'.⁴¹² Tom Garvin mentions that 'the event had the air of an enactment on stage about it'.⁴¹³ The most detailed works investigating the Rising as performance and its legacy focus on the 'issues of sex, gender and reproduction... that have been relentlessly replayed in performance because they were part of a series of unresolved tensions that were an inherent part of the original rebellion itself'.⁴¹⁴ However, both James Moran and Susan Cannon Harris, who offer these analyses, take a much longer view of the Rising's legacy and constrict their research predominantly to stage productions by committed nationalists. It is the intention of this research to

⁴⁰⁹ Moran, *Staging the Rising*, p. 5.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁴¹¹ Levitas, *The Theatre of Nation*, pp. 224-225.

⁴¹² Anthony Roche, 'Staging 1916 in 1966: Pastiche, Parody and Problems of Representation', in Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan (eds.) *1916 in 1966 Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin, 2007), p. 304.

⁴¹³ Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics*, p. 112.

⁴¹⁴ Moran, *Staging the Rising*, p. 5.

remain focused on the Rising and the immediate aftermath, in the attempt to further delineate the tensions of competing visions of a republican citizenship, referred to by Moran and Canon Harris, and the reasons they existed. For the purposes of this discussion a performance is characterised as a group of actions, unified by a central narrative that are staged, scripted, directed and rehearsed. It requires an audience and a body of actors. Furthermore, it relies upon interplay between characters and a shared understanding of the social conventions of behaviours and the use of both the actors and audiences' bodies. Whilst the Rising was, by these standards, a performance, it failed in a number of vital ways to achieve the unity of expression necessary to communicate clearly to the audience.

Thomas MacDonagh, James Connolly and Patrick Pearse had each written plays that communicated their own vision of an Irish republic achieved through armed insurrection.⁴¹⁵ Furthermore, the rank and file of the Volunteers had also been, albeit in some cases unwittingly, rehearsing for rebellion. Regular route marches and training sessions combined with events of a larger scale to ensure that each member of the various battalions knew how to drill, follow commands, and had an understanding of rudimentary military procedure. The regular parades and route marches, including more ostentatious events such as O'Donovan Rossa's funeral also allowed for the inhabitants of the city to grow accustomed to the presence of uniformed Volunteers on the streets. This connection between the geography of Dublin and the staging of the Rising is an important one. As the first chapter of this thesis explored, the central urban thoroughfares of

⁴¹⁵ Moran, *Staging the Rising*, p. 21.

Dublin were integral to both the individual performances of identity and the expression of political beliefs. O'Connell Street had, for a long time prior to the Rising, been the site of street protests owing to its unusual width and potential for maximum exposure as a result of the heavy footfall of pedestrian and motorised traffic.⁴¹⁶ Far from the street being merely a necessary backdrop to events, it formed an integral part of the stage, and individuals interacted with it constantly in order to communicate their protest and message to others.

[The GPO] was a symbol of commercial rather than military power, and it had a very different standing with the Irish public [to Dublin castle]. It was situated in the heart of the commercial district, yet surrounded by slums. The GPO portico was used as a shelter by Dublin shoppers but also by the city's prostitutes. It stood for control but was also where you brought your stamps. The building managed to function simultaneously as a symbol of empire and a quotidian aspect of Dublin life.⁴¹⁷

Similarly, the majority of the buildings occupied by the rebels were locations that the citizens of Dublin would have interacted with as part of their daily routines. Ben Novick suggests that the Easter Rising was never intended to be a military victory, rather it was a continuation of Fenian ideals of 'propaganda by deed' in which 'locations in Dublin were selected for their psychological and propagandistic impact on the population, instead of their defensive strength'.⁴¹⁸ The failure to occupy buildings that gave the rebels the best chance of military success has often been cited as evidence that the Rising was intended as a blood sacrifice.⁴¹⁹ Whilst this assessment of the Rising has been consistently revised and challenged the fact remains that

⁴¹⁶ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, pp. 8-9.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda and the First World War* (Dublin, 2001), p. 18.

⁴¹⁹ Knirck, *Imagining Ireland's Independence*, p. 37.

much of the work considering the Rising as a performance consistently returns to the futility of the venture.⁴²⁰ This is no doubt because in the theatrical reincarnations of the Rising that followed it, the idea of a noble, redemptive sacrifice remained strong. However, it is vital that the performative elements of the Rising are assessed separately from its theatrical legacy.

The stated intention of the Rising was to establish an Irish republic through armed insurrection. The proclamation established the republic in rhetoric and the rebels fought to bring it about.⁴²¹ Given, however, that nobody expected the rebellion to succeed, it can also be seen as acting out, in microcosm, the vision of a future republic. Rebels performed to the Dubliners living in the city, they performed to the British, both in Ireland and England and they performed to Irishmen across the country (albeit belatedly as most news sources failed). Crucially however, the rebels also performed republican identity to one another. Each individual present during the republic's inaugural day had a stake in its short-lived existence and a hand in shaping its future. And, as such, each individual performed his or her own interpretation of a republican citizen. It is this final performance, I suggest, that led to the confused performance of the Rising to its multiple audiences. Furthermore, this bewilderment was borne out of confusion

⁴²⁰ Hardiman, "Shot in Cold Blood" Military law and Irish Perceptions in the Suppression of the 1916 Rebellion', p. 226. See Also, Greaves, *1916 as History* and F. X. Martin, 'The 1916 Rising: A "Coup d'État" or a "Bloody Protest"', *Studio Hibernica*, 8 (1968), pp. 106-137.

⁴²¹ For a more detailed exploration of the Proclamation and its role in establishing a republic in rhetoric see Fitzgibbon, *Turning Points of the Irish Revolution*, p. 1.

within the rebels' own ranks about the intricacies of that body politic and the performances of gender expected by its constituent members.⁴²²

The most obvious evidence of the divergent ideas rebels held about the rights and roles of citizens within the republic is the role of women within the Rising. The confusion experienced by women trying to gain entry to the various garrisons around Dublin has been discussed at some length earlier in this chapter. It is certainly true that some women were prepared to, and even insisted upon, taking on more auxiliary tasks. However, it is equally the case that the women of the Irish Citizen Army demanded that they be given a more active, front line role. In doing so, these women were asserting their right to fight for, and participate in, an Irish republic on an equal footing with men.⁴²³ The masculine gender performance that the bearing of arms entailed was, however, fundamentally de-stablisng to the symbolic constructions of womanhood in advanced nationalist rhetoric. In order to take up arms and fight alongside men, 'women at the Royal College of Surgeons reportedly changed from skirts to trousers when their shifts as nurses or couriers ended and more snipers were needed; in order to hold a gun, they had to wear pants'.⁴²⁴ As Margaret Skinnider bluntly stated, 'I changed once more into uniform, for the work of war can only be done by those who wear its dress'.⁴²⁵ This suggests that the women of the ICA were

⁴²² Moira Gatens provides further exploration of the allegorical artifice of the body politic and argues that the central challenge to the construction of the body politic is who precisely is represented by it. Especially, when, as she points out, it is almost exclusively imagined and articulated as a male body. Women, she argues are excluded from the body politic both allegorically and in real terms because of their corporeal specificity. See Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, pp. 21-23.

⁴²³ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 44.

⁴²⁴ Weihman, "'Doing My Bit for Ireland': Transgressing Gender in the Easter Rising", p. 235.

⁴²⁵ Helena Molony quoted in Margaret Ward, *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Cork, 1995), p. 78.

allowed to take up arms as necessity dictated. However, in order to perform a masculine gender role they had to don male attire. This fast paced display of gender fluidity fundamentally unsettled the notion that lay behind much of the nationalist ideology; namely, that of a feminine Ireland competing against the savagery of a masculine imperial centre (England). The result, Weihman argues, is that 'woman as a symbol of the nation becomes unidentifiable, and thus nation as a concept becomes amorphous and uncontainable'.⁴²⁶ Uniforms, and the masculine coded militancy they signified also appear to have been a contentious issue prior to the Rising. Father O'Donaghue, for example, claimed he lost heart in the Irish Volunteers after the latter worked alongside Cumann na mBan stating 'I would not have anything to do with it then. I had a horror of ladies being in uniform and masquerading as soldiers'.⁴²⁷ This witness, however, did subsequently participate in the Easter Rising, and ate food prepared by members of Cumann na mBan. It is not clear whether the women who cooked the food were wearing uniform at the time, but what is clear from the statement is that the uniform signified militancy, and that this was considered an inappropriate gender display for a woman regardless of the context; whereas replicating domestic norms during the conflict was viewed as women behaving like good patriots and supporting the cause for which the Volunteers were fighting. Similarly, P.S. O'Hegarty, a noted misogynist, gave this assessment of the effects that the Easter Rising, and the subsequent War of Independence, had on women:

⁴²⁶ Weihman, "'Doing My Bit for Ireland': Transgressing Gender in the Easter Rising', p. 228.

⁴²⁷ Very Rev. Fr T. O'Donaghue, WS/1666, NAI, p. 3.

Women's business in the world is with the things of life, with the things that make life; but these women busied themselves with nothing but the things of death.... War, and the things which war breeds- intolerance, swagger, hardness, unwomanliness – captured the women [and] turned them into unlovely, destructive-minded, arid begetters of violence.⁴²⁸

O'Hegarty is unable to provide a clear description of 'womanliness' other than by juxtaposing it against masculinity. Nonetheless in his account he asserts that the place of women within the struggle for independence should have been confined to performing tasks, wearing the clothes, and surrounding themselves with the objects, which formed the nexus of signs that defined them as feminine. This misogynistic assessment of the role of women within the Rising was not unique. However, it is at odds with the accounts of rebels, both male and female, who were able to comfortably recognise the contribution of women to the armed insurrection. The contrast between these two interpretations of the active role enacted by some women in the Rising serves to illustrate that there were fundamental tensions within the advanced nationalist community as to appropriate gender performances. The failure to reconcile these contrasting views meant that throughout the Rising the allocation of tasks and duties to women, and the capacity in which they served in occupied spaces remained a contentious issue throughout the week. As their refusal to vacate the GPO demonstrates, there can be little doubt that, despite the highly gendered and domesticated tasks that many of the women in particular of Cumann na

⁴²⁸ P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin: How It Won It, and How It Used It* (Dublin, 1924), p. 57.

mBan were asked to perform during the Rising, many thought of themselves as soldiers of the newly formed republic.⁴²⁹

The rebels spent a great deal of time and effort demarcating spaces within occupied buildings along heavily gendered lines. Kitchens, sleeping areas, rudimentary field hospitals and first aid posts were quickly established. Of course, this would be normal practise during any occupation. It was unusual however, to have a force that was partially comprised of women. They were quickly removed to these more domestic areas of the rebels' stage and away from any front line action. Often, the narratives of these women of Cumann na mBan reflect the boredom and isolation they felt. These women found that far from being in the thick of the fight they were in the kitchen replicating many of the chores that would have comprised their usual day.⁴³⁰

Eamon deValera refused to have any women within his garrison 'due to their lack of soldierly training' and because he 'believed women should be spared the horrors of war'.⁴³¹ His refusal to allow members of Cumann na mBan to offer their services at Boland's Mill, even in an auxiliary capacity, illustrates that regardless of the equality conferred to them by the Proclamation, the attitude towards women during the Rising was far from united. However, it also demonstrates the importance to the rebels of, not only controlling the gender performances of women, but also of creating spaces where militarised masculinity could be performed.

⁴²⁹ Miss Louise Gavan Duffy, WS/216, p. 8.

⁴³⁰ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 114.

⁴³¹ McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan*, p. 56.

Whether or not women should be given the possession of a weapon and permitted to occupy the more militarised spaces within the Rising is consistent with a wider theme in many of the witness statements provided, that highlighted the importance of weaponry, or, more specifically, of guns. Even before the Rising ownership of a rifle was of utmost importance to many Volunteers. It conferred status upon the individual. Professor O'Briain, who had no idea that the Easter Sunday manoeuvres were a front for the actual Rising, 'spent the rest of Friday and most of Saturday looking for a bayonet and other articles of equipment'.⁴³² He was determined that he should be fully equipped in the hopes that his Company would win a prize. Likewise, Ignatius Callender recalled how 'men whom one would think should have brought boots or other wearing apparel, cheerfully provided themselves with munitions instead; they were inspired with such great enthusiasm that they forgot their own personal needs'.⁴³³

The emphasis on arms and ammunition was not unique to the Volunteers. This was, after all, 1916, the height of the First World War. Conscription had been introduced to Britain in January and the Loyalists of Ulster were also actively engaged, since 1914, in the procurement of guns. It was a period in which, for men deemed to be of fighting age, the taking up of arms for a cause was a definitive marker of masculinity.⁴³⁴ Even the Redmondite Volunteers, who avowedly supported constitutional means of achieving Irish self-governance, placed a heavy focus on arms.⁴³⁵ Similarly,

⁴³² Professor Liam O'Briain, WS/7, p. 2.

⁴³³ Ignatius Callender, WS/923, p. 2.

⁴³⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1996), pp. 11-30.

⁴³⁵ Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London, 2005), pp. 42-45.

the language of a blood sacrifice was not unique to the advanced nationalists. John S. Ellis argues that Redmond believed in the unifying capacity of the blood of unionists and nationalists shed for a mutual cause during World War One.⁴³⁶ Cannon Harris also establishes the potential this discourse had for unity rather than division claiming that

The hope cherished by the *Irish Volunteer's* editorialists and balladeers is that once they realise their common bond as men, the citizens of all thirty-two counties will awake to the realization that they are Irish and that therefore their natural place is in the ranks of the Volunteers. Essentializing the rifle as part of this 'natural' Irish male identity allows republicans to turn Unionist militarism from a threat to national integrity into the hope of eventual reconciliation.⁴³⁷

Given that, as established earlier, very few people knew definitively about plans for the Rising until the very last moment, it is clear that the weapons were symbolically important long before they were practically vital. They were accessories in the performance of a particular form of masculinity that was prevalent across Europe during the decade of the Rising. Indeed, despite Eoin MacNeill's objections to the Rising when the moment eventually arrived, the duty of Irish Volunteers to arm themselves 'to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland' formed the second stated object of the Volunteers constitution which all new recruits signed upon enrolment.⁴³⁸ The reality of armed rebellion, however, required that some of the combatants would be unarmed. For Volunteers who saw the possession of a rifle as a hallmark of masculinity

⁴³⁶ John S. Ellis, 'The Degenerate and the Martyr: Nationalist Propaganda and the Contestation of Irishness, 1914-1918', *Eire Ireland*, 35:3-4 (2000-2001), p. 20. See also Paul Bew, 'The Easter Rising: Lost Leaders and Lost Opportunities', *The Irish Review*, Winter (1991-1992), pp. 9-13.

⁴³⁷ Cannon-Harris, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama*, pp. 134-5.

⁴³⁸ Constitution of the Irish Volunteers, LA1/h/1(11), Eoin MacNeill Collection, UCDA.

this remained a source of disappointment. The fact that this frustration is such a recognisable theme in witness statements some forty years after the event is testament to the fact that the possession of a gun or other weapon was seen as an integral feature of 'doing a man's part for Ireland'.⁴³⁹ One Volunteer recalled how he escorted a van on Easter Sunday and imagined that 'the van contained ammunition and rifles, I set about my job excitedly and was even contemplating asking Jimmy for one. I was disappointed however. The van contained nothing save trenching tools... very important tools but they meant nothing to me'.⁴⁴⁰ Once the Rising had fully begun it was the roof of the GPO that 'was the most coveted post – it involved handling a gun... and it offered a great vantage point to pick out snipers and shoot at advancing infantry'.⁴⁴¹ Whilst the men who were actually stationed on the roof give a different recollection of their 'coveted' post, for many of the other Volunteers theirs was a position to envy.⁴⁴² The realities of rebellion however, were often distinctly drabber. Most men spent their time 'lugging material about to build barricades, or making loopholes and boring through walls'.⁴⁴³

Andrew McDonnell was stationed in Boland's mill and had arrived on Easter Monday with a pike. Despite the fact that the pike was a completely useless tool for modern street warfare that involved heavy artillery, those within the Irish Volunteers who, by trade were either blacksmiths or farriers, had been charged with making pike heads in preparation for the

⁴³⁹ James Foran, WS/243, NAI, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁰ William Christian, WS/646, NAI, p. 3.

⁴⁴¹ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, pp. 36-38.

⁴⁴² Fintan Murphy, WS/370, NAI, p. 8.

⁴⁴³ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, pp. 36-37.

Rising.⁴⁴⁴ Despite their limited utility in modern warfare, the pike was highly symbolic to the nationalist community. Pikes had been used in the failed 1798 rebellion and as such they were an iconic reference to a tradition of Irish insurrection. However, the force with which the rebellion was suppressed meant that the pike also became symbolic of British ruthlessness and superior might. Following the centenary, in 1898, the pike had begun to feature prominently in marches and had been replicated on the badges, flags, and insignia of advanced nationalist groups, such as Na Fianna Eireann. Thus, despite the pike's limited suitability as a weapon, its symbolic importance meant that, in lieu of a gun, it facilitated a performance of militarised masculinity within the advanced nationalist community. To return, however to McDonnell, upon his arrival at Boland's Mill he 'was put digging a trench and my trench digger was in action, while my treasured pike was hidden behind some sacks of flour with the set intention of taking it home when all this fuss was over'.⁴⁴⁵ Later that day, when a pike was needed as a flagstaff, he relinquished the pike and was armed with a shotgun by his 'hero' Simon Donnelly. He was placed on a low roof of the bakery 'with orders to fire on any British troops should they appear in the street below. I was wide-awake: my vision of the big manoeuvre was gone; I was a soldier'.⁴⁴⁶ Later still McDonnell was 'recalled to the bakery, I was given a crowbar and lost my shotgun'.⁴⁴⁷ It is only when he is armed with a

⁴⁴⁴ Michael Newell, WS/342, NAI, p. 1. See also John Flanagan, WS/1316, NAI, p. 6 and Patrick Doyle, WS/1298, NAI, p. 5 both of these men state that pikes were also in production after the Rising with the intention that they could be used to repel efforts to enforce conscription in Ireland.

⁴⁴⁵ Andrew McDonnell, WS/1768, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

shotgun that he acknowledges the uselessness of his pike, defines himself as a soldier, and appears to recognise the distinctly modern character of the Easter Rising which set it apart from previous attempts at armed insurrection in Ireland. However, later in the statement he takes time to mournfully note that his 'treasured' pike was eventually destroyed during the fighting. For McDonnell his participation in the fight as a 'soldier' relied upon his handling of a symbolically significant weapon. McDonnell eventually realised that the 'big manoeuvre' was a fantasy. Nevertheless, he never seems to fully comprehend the reality of fighting meant that for many, being an active rebel who made a worthwhile contribution to the Rising meant performing manual tasks with common implements such as shovels. In essence, whilst he followed orders, his concept of how he should individually perform the part of the Irish rebel, both to civilian onlookers and his fellow Volunteers, was at odds with the part required of him in the broader performance of the Irish Republican Army. The tone of his statement suggests that the loss of *his* shotgun made him feel emasculated and redundant.

The premium placed by Volunteers on being armed created problems for their leaders when it came to training men for auxiliary positions such as medical units. As Sean Byrne noted,

Some time after I had joined the Volunteers as an ordinary Volunteer there was a call for men for the first aid classes. Most of the Volunteers did not seem to like the idea of going to these classes, they seemed to think that they would not be good soldiers if they attended them. It was pointed out from time to time that a medical man was just as important as anybody else. Following these

appeals I decided I would give in my name to the Captain to go to the first aid classes.⁴⁴⁸

It is interesting that Byrne eventually signed up to the classes after being assured of the importance of 'medical men'. However, the implication is that first aid was not the work of *real* men and 'good' soldiers. This was in part due to the fact that first aid was a key focus of Cumann na mBan, in their auxiliary role. Consequently, the administration of medical care during the Rising was viewed within the context of the heavily gendered role of nurturing and caring and therefore, perceived by some men as emasculating. Once again, the need of the individual to perform only the tasks that were in keeping with their conception of what it meant to be an Irish rebel were at odds with the requirements of the situation they found themselves in during Easter week. The conflict over the appropriate role for the male rebels remained well into the Rising even as the need for medics was of increasing urgency and obvious necessity. When John Doyle attempted to sequester men for medical work he found that 'most of the Captains grumbled at giving men away... I told them that they were not giving them away because at the time there was no Red Cross'.⁴⁴⁹ In some respects the implication is that had there been members of Cumann na mBan, or neutral civilians willing to provide medical aid, then these men would have been given away needlessly. In the end Doyle only succeeded in obtaining the additional men he required by assuring the Captains that 'these are lines men' a statement he clarified stating that 'in other words,

⁴⁴⁸ Sean Bryne, WS/422, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁹ John J. Doyle, WS/748, NAI, p. 5.

they were in the firing line and could be armed'.⁴⁵⁰ To ensure the successful performance of the republican rebellion to a wider audience unarmed combatants were, of course, necessary. However, it appears as though this need was, often times, incompatible with the identity performances of individual rebels. Furthermore, for the Rising to be correctly interpreted by its audience, the rebels were required to operate as one, unified force. The inconsistent treatment of women, their refusal to perform more auxiliary tasks, and the desire for front line, armed positions by individual rebels, destabilised this unity.

In sum, the Easter Rising forms a critical juncture at which the leaders of the Rising declared the Volunteers to be an army. As an army, the rebels, by virtue of the Proclamation, became the authorised body in charge of social control within the newly formed republic. This was a fundamental alteration in the role of the citizen militias whose membership occupied buildings on Easter Monday, 1916. This alteration caused confusion for onlookers, who had grown accustomed to the sight of volunteer militias on the street, and the combatants alike. The Volunteers were no longer voicing their own discontent at the structures of sovereignty and rule in Ireland, they were now proclaiming to speak on behalf of, and represent *all* Irish opinion, and furthermore, to state that opinion to be in favour of a republic. This required that the personal autonomy and agency shown in the early stages of mobilisation, be quickly shed. Unlike a citizen militia of volunteers, an army required a strict chain of command and a complete adherence to orders. However, the majority of the rebels continued, in a vast number of

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

cases to behave as a militia of volunteers. Even if it were possible to categorically discern a unified understanding of the leaders' aims and strategy the Rising would still have presented a confused performance because the rebels acted out of personal interpretation rather than adherence to direct, clear and unified orders. Consequently, the general public who formed the audience of the Rising were confused and unable to engage with the performance as the leaders had anticipated. It is this that was largely responsible for the Rising's failure to garner support.

Civilians: The Easter Rising and its Audience

The release of the Bureau of Military History witness statements into the public domain has facilitated an increase in the number of scholars investigating the ways in which the rank and file of the Volunteers experienced the Rising.⁴⁵¹ The witness statements also give us tantalising glimpses of how the civilian population of Dublin responded to the events of Easter Week.⁴⁵² These indications have been used to good effect in recent monographs that have added fruitfully to the sparse accounts of civilian activity.⁴⁵³ The looting that took place is recognised as particularly significant, and an emphasis is placed on the hostility shown towards the

⁴⁵¹ See McGarry, *The Rising*, Wills, *Dublin 1916* and, Ryan, *Witnesses*.

⁴⁵² For the purposes of this thesis a civilian is defined as a non-combatant. I include active, but neutral parties, for example St. John's Ambulance workers, within the definition of civilian.

⁴⁵³ See McGarry, *The Rising*; Wills, *Dublin 1916* and Shane Hegarty and Fintan O'Toole, *The Irish Times Book of the 1916 Rising* (Dublin, 2006).

Volunteers, particularly by separation women.⁴⁵⁴ It is, however, the sheer weight of information in the witness statements that allow for these features of hostility, and opportunistic looting, to be contextualized within evidence of civilian reactions ranging from sympathy to bemusement. However, where non-combatants appear in the statements it is often as subjects observed by the contributor. Despite the existence of a slim number of first person, civilian accounts, it remains a challenging pursuit to gather accurate information about the way in which Dubliners made sense of their experiences during the Rising.⁴⁵⁵ However, it will be demonstrated here that the rebels' performance during the Rising was ultimately unintelligible to the civilians caught in its midst. In the accounts that remain, civilians do not talk about the Rising as an event that established an Irish Republic. Rather, they discuss it as an urban rebellion that changed the nature of their relationship to the Dublin cityscape.

The Easter Rising was, as discussed previously, a performance. However, a consequence of the rebels' occupation of buildings was that the only elements of the Rising that were visible to their audience of civilians was the destruction of buildings, the barricades, and the injuries caused as a result of bullets from often invisible gunmen. Unlike the political street theatre that had preceded the Rising, the rebels brought the majority of the action inside and away from view. This meant that often times, the consequences of their actions could be seen but not, the performance itself. The handful of remaining diaries written by civilians during Easter week,

⁴⁵⁴ Greaves, *1916 as History*, p. 29. Also, for Volunteer accounts of the hostility shown towards rebels by Separation Women see Frank Henderson, WS/249, p. 15 and William O'Brian, WS/1766, NAI, p. 13.

⁴⁵⁵ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 62.

taken alongside the witness statements, indicate that changes to the city, looting, the availability of food, and the treatment of dead and injured bodies were the concerns that typified their experiences. No doubt instincts of self-preservation and fear of harm help to explain the remarks on the availability of food and civilian casualties in the accounts of Dubliners. However, a number of similarities exist between civilian accounts both in their structure and the events they choose to relay that suggest there was a common way of interacting with the Rising that extended beyond self-preservation and fear, and that differed significantly from the expectations of the rebels. Discussion around the availability of food, for example, is prominent in the vast majority of accounts, both of civilians and combatants. For civilians, certain groceries quickly became scarce and subsequently unavailable. So much so that James Stephens began adding lists in his diary entries of foodstuffs that could no longer be procured.⁴⁵⁶ The problems were not limited to restricted supplies in the shops themselves but also to the dangers faced in attempting to navigate the city in order to reach the stores. One British soldier on duty during the Rising recalled how

Each morning a sergeant and I were detailed to escort many of the housewives – who desired to shop – to the shops to get the essentials for their families, accompanied in many instances by their young children, clinging to them, some laughing, others crying, many extremely poorly clad, half starved, dragging themselves wearily along in small groups. They were always pleased to have our company, and after shopping we escorted them home again.⁴⁵⁷

Moreover, the scarcity of food meant that individuals moved around the city in ways that would, in the normal course of events, been unusual.

⁴⁵⁶ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 62.

⁴⁵⁷ Albert George Fletcher Desborough, WS/1604, NAI, p. 6.

Consequently, the familiar spectacle of the city and those who filled its streets was changed. For example, T.K. Moylan observed that

Here [in Rathmines] might be seen the extraordinary spectacle of all the toffs and lady toffs, nuts of the highest type wandering [sic] their way homewards with a plain cottage loaf or two under their arms, without even a scrap of newspaper to hide its nakedness. Furthermore the possessors of the loaves seemed quite 'cocky' over their possessions.⁴⁵⁸

Similar observations are made in other accounts of Easter week and they highlight an important issue.⁴⁵⁹ The streets of Dublin, as this thesis has already addressed, were places where identity was performed. The Rising, in all of its chaos and uniqueness, prevented civilians from engaging in their daily routine. Consequently, the ways in which people made use of the city that demonstrated aspects of their identity, such as their social class, were disrupted. Throughout accounts of the Rising, events and circumstances are reported that can easily be interpreted as expressions of fear, shock and self-preservation. However, as in the case of food shortages, these concerns are framed as urban experiences that disrupted the way in which civilians interacted with both the space, and others, around them. For civilians the Rising was, above all things, an event that took place in the city. Whilst remaining accounts by non-combatants may omit judgements about the rebels politics and aims during the Rising they never fail to give account of the destruction of the city and the way in which they moved around it during the fighting and the weeks that followed. To assist in contextualising civilian accounts of the Rising it is important to remember that the presence

⁴⁵⁸ A Dubliner's Diary by Thomas King Moylan, MS 9620, NLI.

⁴⁵⁹ Henry Hanna, for example, gives an almost identical account. See The Sinn Féin Rising as seen from a suburb of Dublin – a personal narrative by Henry Hanna, MS 10066/192, Dennis Johnson Collection, TCDA.

of military and paramilitary organisations marching and parading on the streets was not unusual. Indeed, the Irish Citizen Army had been staging mock occupations prior to the Rising in the express hope that, when they occupied in earnest, the authorities would be caught unawares. Conversely, in the weeks leading up to the Rising British officers had, on account of an increase in the drilling and marching of nationalists and unionists alike, taken ‘the precaution of carrying their regimental sticks with them, when out for leisure, “In case”’.⁴⁶⁰ Similarly, the Witness Statements routinely make note of the fact that there was a sense of foreboding in the spring of 1916. However, W.G. Smith’s summation, during the first hours of the Rising that ‘it was probably only an ordinary riot’ shows the extent to which the population were entirely adjusted to the sight of citizen militias on the street and political street theatre.⁴⁶¹ Even after hearing about the supposed stabbing of an RIC officer by Sinn Fein insurgents, J. R. Clarke felt sure that ‘it was only an accidental attack and [that the Rising] would be over in an hour or two’.⁴⁶² Violence, however extreme, was not necessarily an indication to civilians of the severity and originality of what was unfolding in the city.⁴⁶³ Consequently, the Rising was, for many, a source of curiosity rather than concern.⁴⁶⁴ The activities and scenes outside the GPO are described by Clair Wills as ‘drunken parties in the street, firework displays, groups of people chatting at the barricades and street corners and taking advantage of the

⁴⁶⁰ Albert George Fletcher Desborough, WS/1604, p. 1.

⁴⁶¹ Autograph narrative of W.G. Smith re: his experiences as a St. John’s Ambulance Volunteer in Dublin 1916, MS 24952, NLI. See also, Brian O’Neill, *Easter Week* (London, 1936) p. 2.

⁴⁶² Diary of Easter Week by J. R. Clarke, P169, UCDA.

⁴⁶³ Recollections of Easter Monday 1916 by A.A. Luce, MS 4874/2/2, TCDA.

⁴⁶⁴ A Dubliner’s Diary by Thomas King Moylan, MS 9620.

fine weather: the carnival atmosphere was annoying to the Volunteers, as it suggested that this was not a serious rebellion'.⁴⁶⁵ When Thomas K. Moylan referred to 'a very curious spectacle' that 'wandering crowds of sightseers' had assembled to see he was not referring to the GPO but instead to O'Connell Street.⁴⁶⁶ It was the sight of the closed shops, milling crowds and absence of traffic that was unusual.⁴⁶⁷ In turning their attention to the street, spectators were unable to see the rebels' performance taking place within the occupied buildings. However, it was a reasonable focus of attention as the street formed the established stage for performances of both politics and identity at the time. It was the rebels who were breaking with convention by moving these performances inside and away from view. The civilians were not providing an audience for the rebels' actual performance, which was taking place within the GPO. Instead, they were watching and engaging with the consequence of the rebels' actions. The leaders of the Rising had anticipated that civilians would either lend their bodies to the fight, thus becoming stage actors themselves, or else that they would respect the conventions of an audience or observe the action from a safe distance. What quickly becomes clear from surviving accounts however is that in a great number of cases non-combatants refused to do either. Instead, this audience was making its own performance that the rebels on the roof and at the windows of the G. P. O. had little option but to watch. It was a performance based upon carnival and spectacular, resembling the pantomimes and melodramas of the Queen's Theatre as much as the rebels' performance was

⁴⁶⁵ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 50.

⁴⁶⁶ A Dubliner's Diary by Thomas King Moylan, MS 9620.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

mirroring the high ideals of Abbey plays or a piece of theatre written by one of their leaders.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of the looting that took place along O'Connell Street and the major shopping streets that adjoin it. The looters' counter-performance to the one going on in the GPO., and other outposts, undermined that of the rebels. The proclamation, that had been read out by Pearse and posted in the vicinity of the GPO, had called on no individual within the new republic to 'dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine'.⁴⁶⁸ There are numerous examples of rebels, mostly from the more socio-economically prosperous Irish Volunteers, leaving valuable articles undisturbed.⁴⁶⁹ George Plunkett even paid for the Kimmage Garrison's tram tickets to the city centre after the walk proved too arduous for them.⁴⁷⁰ However, for the rebels, it was important that, in addition to behaving honourably themselves, that they were able to elicit that same behaviour from the wider populace. To this end, the Irish Citizen Army had anticipated rioting and looting and had made police truncheons in order to quell public disorder. However, fighting as they were with diminished numbers, when the time came there were no spare men to police the looting on O'Connell Street.⁴⁷¹ Despite this, a number of Volunteers took it upon themselves to attempt to police the crowds illustrating that they also felt as

⁴⁶⁸ See Conor Kostick and Lorcan Collins, *The Easter Rising: A Guide to Dublin in 1916* (Dublin, 2000), p. 55 for a discussion of the rebels belief that the republic should not be 'sullied' by looting. Reproductions of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic are widely available. The copy used in this research can be found in Hegarty and O'Toole, *The Irish Times*.

⁴⁶⁹ Kostick and Collins, *The Easter Rising*, p. 55.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁷¹ Mr Eamonn Bulfin, WS/497, p. 8.

though petty larceny should not be allowed to detract attention from the rebels. As one combatant observed,

On Wednesday afternoon we noticed four or five men and women coming from the direction of Mary's Lane. Between them they were carrying a piano which we concluded they had stolen from some business premises. We called on them to halt but they refused to do so. We fired a few shots over their heads as a warning and they dropped the piano and made off.⁴⁷²

Whilst the looters may have heeded the dangerous warning given by Michael O' Flannagan, other accounts suggest that the effect of these attempts to dissuade looting were only temporary.⁴⁷³ Despite the ineffectiveness of these strategies, it goes to show that, in the midst of the fighting, the rebels took it upon themselves to attempt law enforcement. It should also be recognised that, in the absence of a police force, civilians such as Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, also took to the streets in an attempt to prevent the looting and destruction of private property. It must be remembered that, whilst the windows of private homes, business and public buildings were smashed and interiors were broken down in order to create stable barricades and fortifications for the combatants, in the early stages of the rebellion the most significant damage to private property was caused by the looters who were taking advantage of the breakdown of law enforcement. By Tuesday, 25 April, Thomas King Moylan noted that,

All the shops in the vicinity of the pillar [on Sackville Street] were mere dishevelled wrecks so far as the ground and first floors were concerned. I particularly noticed McDowell's the jewellers, Tyler's boot people, and Dunn's hat shop, needless to remark not a vestige of their stock was to be seen.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² Michael O'Flanagan, WS/800, p. 19.

⁴⁷³ A Dubliner's Diary by Thomas King Moylan, MS 9620.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

These farcical and carnivalesque instances of opportunistic looting that took place on Dublin's main thoroughfare are addressed in the vast majority of accounts of the Rising. For combatants and non-combatants alike, the spectacle of the shops being pillaged for goods formed a central feature in their experience of the Rising. It is important to recognise that these sights were not separated from the actions of combatants by civilians but rather; they happened alongside and formed part of the broader spectacle of the Rising. St. John Ervine recalled how a 'horde of looters swarmed out of the slums, the worst in Europe and ransacked the shops'.⁴⁷⁵ Whereas John Dillon appeared to fear the looters more than the armed rebels writing 'I was very much afraid that the slum people would break into the public houses and that the city would be in the hands of [a] drunken howling mob'.⁴⁷⁶ The effect of the looting was such that first-hand accounts frequently reserved their sternest condemnation for the looters. One civilian recorded in his diary that 'hell won't be hot enough for those looters', underlining the words to emphasise the point.⁴⁷⁷

Volunteers on the roof of the GPO had a different view of the spectacle. Eamon Bulfin, for example, recorded his concern over the ammunition the Volunteers were keeping on the roof. However, his statement also provides an indication of, not only the frantic activity on the street below, but also the lack of concern for their own welfare that appears

⁴⁷⁵ 'I Was There' an account of the Easter Rebellion by St. John Ervine, MS 11232/4/12, TCDA.

⁴⁷⁶ John Dillon to Lady Matthew 25 April-1 May 1916; an account of the Rising, MS 9820, TCDA.

⁴⁷⁷ John Clarke's Diary of a Catholic Shopkeeper, MS 10485, NLI.

to have been shown by civilians in relation to the street warfare going on around them;

I remember we were still on the roof when Lawrence's went on fire. It was a sports shop, and all the kids brought out a lot of fireworks, made a huge pile of them in the middle of O'Connell Street, and set fire to them. That is the one thing that will stick in my mind forever. We had our bombs on top of the Post Office, and these fireworks were shooting up in the sky. We were very nervous. There were Catherine wheels going up O'Connell Street and Catherine wheels coming down O'Connell Street.⁴⁷⁸

Despite the fact that looting occupies a prominent place in the vast majority of accounts of the Rising very few attempts have been made to assess why the looting was such an emotive issue for civilians and rebels alike, or to give a voice to those who took part in the looting. Fearghal McGarry and Clair Wills have both made recent and significant contributions to these questions. The reliance on the BMH witness statements means that the Rising is still predominantly seen through the recollections of combatants. However, a small cache of requests from those convicted of looting, and their families, for remission of fines and custodial sentences to the Lord Lieutenant provide a rare glimpse of the looters and their narratives of events. Obviously, the accounts are highly biased, presenting the petitioner as an innocent party and submitted only by those who were deemed to have a reasonable chance of reprieve. Of the approximately four hundred cases of looting that were dealt with by the police courts, only eighteen applications for remittance of fines or sentence now survive.⁴⁷⁹ Of these, only nine cases

⁴⁷⁸ Mr Eamonn Bulfin, WS/497, p. 8.

⁴⁷⁹ Mary Byrne, B22/1916, Criminal Index Files, NAI; Mary Anne Blake, B23/1916, CIF, NAI; Bridget Byrne, B27/1916, CIF, NAI; Mary Corr, C31/1916, CIF, NAI; Kate Hart, H20/1916, CIF, NAI; James Kenna, K16/1916, CIF, NAI; Christine Kelly, K21/1916, CIF, NAI; George O'Reily, O13/1916, CIF, NAI; Thomas O'Neill, O14/1916, CIF, NAI; Christina McDonagh, Mc36/1916, CIF, NAI; Johanna Milne, M35/1916, CIF, NAI; Elizabeth Stanton, S13/1916,

resulted in reductions to the custodial sentence or fine. It is difficult to overstate how small a sample this is, or, how problematic it is to attempt to extrapolate broad conclusions. Be that as it may, they are subject to analysis here because they are amongst the only records we have in which looters are given a voice. Moreover, these narratives, however brief and small a sample, provide an insight into which goods were stolen, and how the communities around the looters responded to their actions. Consequently, while the limitations of these records are acknowledged, the information they can provide about the looters and the environment in which they operated will be interrogated more thoroughly in the pages that follow. A number of interesting similarities exist in the petitions. Firstly, the majority of the cases involved women. Secondly, with the exception of Ellen Sherry and Mary Sammond, twenty-five and twenty-two years old respectively, most women ranged from thirty-eight to fifty-eight years of age with eighty per cent of that number being in their forties. In the eighteen cases available only four relate to men. The reprieve applications also support the characterisation of looters, in other primary accounts, as 'shawlies', the nickname for the working-class women of the Dublin tenements and slums.⁴⁸⁰ These women are also portrayed as being the most vociferous, and often physical, in their condemnation of the rebels, this was often ascribed to their status as separation women. Once again the applications bear out

CIF, NAI; John Sweeney, S14/1916, CIF, NAI; Mary Sammond, S15/1916, CIF, NAI; Eilen Sherry or Dalton, S19/1916, CIF, NAI; Bridget Tappe, T5/1916, CIF, NAI; Margaret Tully, T6/1916, CIF, NAI; Mary Ward, W12/1916, CIF, NAI. Although it should be noted that some of these applications were brought on the ground that they were unable to appeal at the time of sentencing owing to the disorder in the system caused by the Rising and so it is safe to assume that some of the four hundred cases that dealt with looting may have been appealed prior to the commencement of a custodial sentence.

⁴⁸⁰ McGarry, *The Rising*, p. 144.

this assessment as five of the women invoke the military service record of their male relatives in their application.⁴⁸¹ Mary Ward even argued that the goods found in her possession were given to her by British troops who knew she was a soldier's widow.⁴⁸² This was possibly an attempt to display their loyalty to the British administration in light of the fact that many of these looters were tried while rebels were still being rounded up and executed. However, it would be wrong to assume that the separation women who remonstrated with the Volunteers, and the looters, were one and the same. Indeed, in all of the cases relating to women, the police found looted goods within their lodgings. This suggests that somebody from *within* the looters' community would have had to alert the police to the presence of looted property, unless of course, the police already knew them. In the cases of the four men who submitted applications they were each apprehended outside. Significantly less detail is given in the statements on their behalf. However, it is interesting that, in the three cases that provide particulars, it is claimed that they came by the stolen goods through a woman and had not stolen them initially.⁴⁸³

It is particularly interesting that the goods itemised in the reports as having been looted are, overwhelmingly, foodstuffs. Numerous accounts point to the fact that the city's sweet shops were the first to be looted.⁴⁸⁴ The

⁴⁸¹ Mary Corr, C31/1916, CIF; Christina McDonagh, Mc36/1916, CIF; Johanna Milne, M35/1916, CIF; Bridget Tappe, T5/1916, CIF; Mary Ward, W12/1916, CIF.

⁴⁸² Mary Ward, W12/1916, CIF. Interestingly, Mary Ward was also occupied as a Charwoman at the Queen's Theatre which was known for its performances with a nationalist character to them. It illustrates that, prior to the Rising, it was not incompatible to be the wife of a British Soldier and also employed in a theatre catering to nationalist tastes.

⁴⁸³ James Kenna, K16/1916, CIF; George O'Reily, O13/1916, CIF; Thomas O'Neill, O14/1916, CIF and John Sweeny, S14/1916, CIF.

⁴⁸⁴ Kostick and Collins, *The Easter Rising*, p. 87.

pathos expressed in the observations that looters avoided, initially at least, the shops containing more valuable luxury goods is perhaps slightly misleading as it implies the looters were not making intelligent choices about what they could reasonably conceal, sell on, and make use of. Given the rapid inflation in the cost of sugar as a consequence of the First World War, it is possible that the large quantities of flour, sugar, golden syrup and currants that were looted were in fact rational choices and that, for many of the cities poorest, they were sating a desire for sweet food that had, for the previous two years, been prohibitively priced. Sugar represented a luxury in many of these individuals' diet and its commercial worth was well known. The furs and other luxury goods in shops such as Cleary's represented luxuries that would not have been obtainable to these individuals in the normal course of events. They would have been impractical and difficult to sell on.

The regularity with which street barricades are discussed in civilian narratives throw their changed relationship with the city into sharp relief. The destruction of buildings created permanent changes to the urban landscape. These changes form the focus of more rigorous analysis later in this chapter. Suffice it to say for now that these changes were reflected on with various degrees of shock, disbelief, and trauma in accounts. In contrast to the destruction of some landmarks, street barricades were temporary additions to the landscape. They were made with whatever the combatants could lay their hands on. As a result, it was not uncommon for the barricades to be made from pieces of domestic furniture. Consequently, combatants had to contend with defending them, not only from the opposing forces, but

also from those civilians who were removing items from the barricade 'screaming with joy, "they're giving away free furniture!"'.⁴⁸⁵ Contemporary accounts also give us an impression of the street cordons as interactive spaces around which people talked, exchanged gossip, remonstrated with the rebels, and observed the fighting. Descriptions of how these roadblocks prevented people from moving around the city in ways that were familiar to them also dominate accounts. A brief ten-page account scribbled into a 1904 desk diary by a clerk, J.R. Clarke is one such account. The urgent tone of his writing is of particular interest as it is typical of surviving contemporary accounts.

April 24

1 o'clock left by tram for Howth with Jean. Tram stopped... by heavy firing down Camden St. A Jarvey dash [sic] up + shouted to a friend Hye [sic] Paddy don't go down there you'll be killed. Fresh Volley of shots and crowd rushing about learned it was the Shin Feiners [sic] firing on the military at Jacobs. Saw 1/2 platoon Irish Rifles turn out of a side street into direction of firing. Got off tram + went round by Harcourt Street. All was quiet. No tram running so proceeded down Earls Court Terrace there the road was barricaded by beer barrels + at the bottom by motor cars but there was not a soul in sight... So thinking that it was only an accidental attack and would be over in an hour or two + not wishing to frighten Jean I proceeded on the way to Amiens Street. Firing continued all the time crossing the Donnybrook tram line saw people all looking in Stephen's Green direction from which sounds of rifle shots came. The North end of the green was empty except for a deserted tram + overturned cart. We proceeded + getting near Westland Row I said it would be better to go down to Kingstown but found the station shut + in the hands of the rebels one of whom we saw on guard. All quiet on Tara St and the people seemingly oblivious of what was going on in the city which measured us.⁴⁸⁶

The erratic tone of Clarke's writing gives a clear indication of the speed with which the Dublin landscape was changed. It is also noticeable

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴⁸⁶ Diary of Easter Week by J. R. Clarke, P169.

that he consistently takes time to mention street names as he tried to navigate his way around this familiar city, finding himself blocked off at almost every turn by barricades and other obstacles. The specific geographical anchoring of his narrative is typical. Indeed, Wills has written that 'participant accounts are often hazy on exactly what time an event occurred, but never on exactly where'.⁴⁸⁷ The more prevalent narratives of active participants can often obscure the noise, fear, panic, and rush of ordinary civilians responding to those first exchanges of rifle fire. Thomas King Moylan, for example, had spent a morning attempting to visit a friend and, following the cessation of the tram service he continued his journey on foot. He noted that 'beyond small groups of people [he] saw nothing'.⁴⁸⁸ However, after less than twenty minutes in his friend's house he 'heard volley firing coming from the Haddington Road direction and people in the streets started running towards the city'.⁴⁸⁹ What Clarke's diary also highlights is the stark contrast between the noise and confusion of Camden Street and the 'quiet' of Harcourt Street directly parallel.⁴⁹⁰ Similarly, those on Tara Street seemed 'oblivious of what was going on in the city' despite being less than five minutes from the GPO and directly off Brunswick Street where a number of the Volunteers had mobilised at number 144.⁴⁹¹ All of Clarke's examples serve to illustrate the speed with which previously safe areas of the city became dangerous battlegrounds. They also highlight the incredibly localised nature of the initial exchanges between the rebels and

⁴⁸⁷ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 33.

⁴⁸⁸ A Dubliner's Diary by Thomas King Moylan, MS 9620.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Diary of Easter Week by J. R. Clarke, P169.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

Crown forces. James Stephens noted that 'In the [General] Post Office neighbourhood the Volunteers had some difficulty in dealing with the people who surged about them while they were preparing the barricade, and hindered them to some extent'.⁴⁹²

The cessation of the tram service was also a major factor in limiting travel around the city. The sight of tram drivers and conductors who 'simply abandoned ship and fled' appears to have illustrated to witnesses just how far order had broken down, and the extent of the panic in Dublin's City Centre on Easter Monday, 1916.⁴⁹³ The tram service was a symbol of urban modernity and the destruction of both the lines and rolling stock became synonymous in the minds of many with the destruction of the modern city itself.⁴⁹⁴ Other tramlines continued to run up until the evening of Easter Monday and witnesses recalled that as 'the trams passed to and fro, the passengers looked curious and puzzled. The fact that the actual Rising had started was only just beginning to sink into their minds'.⁴⁹⁵ For these passengers the experience must have, in some ways, mirrored that of witnessing one of the popular newsreels of the early picture houses, watching unimaginable landscapes, events, and experiences unfolding before their eyes from the relative safety of their tram car. Certainly, J.R. Clarke described how people watched 'the fight at the Post Office as if it were a cinema'.⁴⁹⁶ The barricades and street cordons quickly altered the

⁴⁹² James Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1916), pp. 24-25.

⁴⁹³ Mr Eamonn Bulfin, WS/497, p5.

⁴⁹⁴ Stephanie Raines talks about the centrality of the tram service as a symbol of urban modernity in Stephanie Raines, *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin, 1850-1916* (Dublin, 2010), p. 129 and p. 169.

⁴⁹⁵ Joseph O'Bryne, WS/160, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁶ Diary of Easter Week by J. R. Clarke, P169.

way in which people navigated the city, as did the cessation of the tram service. It was becoming rapidly apparent that the Rising was going to have a lasting impact on the landscape of Dublin. However, the changed relationship between the urban centre and its inhabitants is most pronounced in two anecdotes. The first was the daily ceasefire that was agreed in order to let the park-keeper, Jim Kearney, feed the ducks in St. Stephens Green.⁴⁹⁷ The second is an incident that was remembered by Seamus Kenny in his witness statement.

Another incident during that week concerned a lady who used to sit on the canal banks every morning. She would go away and return about four o'clock in the evening and we thought she might be a spy. One evening the fellows on outpost duty brought her in to one of the out-offices, blindfolded, and got Cumann na mBan girls to search her. She used to come to the canal every day and we did not know whether she was a man or a woman. They found a lot of pawn-tickets on her. She was asked what brought her up there under the cross-fire, and she said she had no work and she used to go there to rest herself. She was blindfolded again and let go.⁴⁹⁸

Both incidents leap out from the historical record as moments of utter absurdity in amongst the turmoil and destruction of the Rising. However, it is precisely because the two individuals in question stoutly refused to adapt their interaction with the space around them and their regular routines that shows how far, and how irrevocably, the city around them had changed as a result of the Rising.

On Wednesday 26 April, the gunboat *Helga* travelled down the Liffey and began shelling Liberty Hall, British reinforcements arrived, and fighting relied more on heavy artillery. Fires spread quickly and many buildings in the city centre were decimated within a day. The increased risks that came

⁴⁹⁷ Kostick and Collins, *The Easter Rising*, p. 79.

⁴⁹⁸ Mr Seamus Kenny, WS/158, NAI, pp. 8-9.

with the undiscerning fires and machine guns meant that many of the suburban civilians remained indoors and avoided the city centre for the remainder of the Rising whilst a number of those from the inner city slums and tenements were forced to flee the centre.⁴⁹⁹

For these individuals, many of whom lived in the numerous slums and tenements that existed in close proximity to the occupied buildings the days that followed would be marked most prominently by destruction, fear and confusion. While Sean Cody, a member of G Company (Irish Volunteers, Dublin Brigade) was keen to point out in his witness statement that the Volunteers attempted to ensure that all the inhabitants living within the barricade were adequately fed he also goes on to state that ‘the taking of the [Linen Hall] barracks was a very easy operation the British soldiers surrendered without resistance. We burned the barracks and so fiercely did it blaze that it was found necessary to lay a line of hose to spray the adjoining tenements with water’.⁵⁰⁰ The destruction of property and possessions as a result of the blaze must have created a hostile feeling towards the Volunteers from those living in the tenements. The increasing danger that arose as a result of the heavy bombardments and fires is marked in civilian accounts by a retreat from the streets and public thoroughfares. Initially, witnesses describe avoiding the street, however, by the end of the week civilians were also avoiding appearing at windows and doors and retreating further into the heart of their homes. This is particularly true of male non-combatants. One of the major effects of this

⁴⁹⁹ Frank Henderson, WS/249, p. 34.

⁵⁰⁰ Mr Seamus Kenny, WS/158, p. 11.

domestic retreat was to entirely deprive the Volunteers of interaction with their, now absent, civilian audience. It was only, upon the rebels' surrender that the two groups would be brought back into contact with one another. It is to that moment that this thesis will now turn its attention.

Executions and Internment

The surrender brought the rebels face to face with both the British soldiers they had been fighting and the civilians who had been caught in the cross fire. For this reason it is one of the clearest indications we have of the degree to which the Rising failed to garner support from the populace. There is broad acknowledgement that the rebels received a hostile reaction from civilians when they surrendered.⁵⁰¹ Furthermore, there is a comprehensive agreement that attitudes only began to alter after the executions of those who were hastily, and sometimes wrongly, convicted of by courts martial of being leaders.⁵⁰²

The cessation of hostilities was, like the Rising as a whole, not uniformly accomplished. Patrick Pearse agreed to an unconditional surrender however, the order to ceasefire had to be counter signed by James Connolly in order that the Irish Citizen Army would comply. Louise Gavan Duffy recalled how, when she communicated news of the surrender to Thomas MacDonagh he was 'not at all pleased' by it.⁵⁰³ Regardless, he and Father Albert proceeded to communicate the order to Eamonn Ceannt.⁵⁰⁴ A

⁵⁰¹ McGarry, *The Rising*, p. 252.

⁵⁰² Githens-Mazer, *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising*, pp. 110-131.

⁵⁰³ Miss Louise Gavan Duffy, WS/216, p. 12.

⁵⁰⁴ James Kenny, WS/174, NAI, p. 6.

number of the leaders however, refused to accept the surrender from anybody but Pearse himself. Thomas Ashe sent Dick Mulcahy to find Pearse for confirmation before agreeing to lay down his company's arms.⁵⁰⁵ Likewise, Con Colbert also initially refused to accept the surrender. It was only when Eamonn Ceannt returned, with the priest who initially relayed the message, wearing neither his Sam Browne belt nor sword that Colbert acknowledged defeat.⁵⁰⁶ Eamon deValera was the last commandant to surrender because he believed the British would not respect the white flag.⁵⁰⁷ Conversely, when Kathleen Lynn, as the only officer remaining, offered her company's surrender, the British debated whether they could accept surrender from a woman.⁵⁰⁸ This problem was not one that faced Markievicz who is reported to have affectionately kissed her gun before shaking hands with each of her men.⁵⁰⁹ The case of these two women illustrates how, even in the dying hours of the Rising, the combatant status of women was a source of confusion for the British military. The reluctance of some officers to surrender is understandable in light of the likely punishment for leading a rebellion in a time of war, especially given that some of the occupied spaces, were well stocked with provisions and were holding their positions well. However, the lack of uniformity shows that the rebels had failed to establish successful communication between traditional chains of command and, as a result, commandants of each outpost retained a great deal of autonomy. There was further ambiguity about how the rebels

⁵⁰⁵ Miss Nora Ashe, WS/645, NAI, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁶ Miss Margaret Kennedy, WS/185, NAI, p. 3.

⁵⁰⁷ Adrian and Sally Warwick-Heller (eds.), *Letters from Dublin, Easter 1916: Alfred Fannin's Diary of the Rising* (Dublin, 1995), p. 42.

⁵⁰⁸ Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 112.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

should conduct the surrender. Eamonn Ceannt demanded of his troops ‘you have all behaved as soldiers for the week, and I hope you will surrender as such’.⁵¹⁰ Thomas MacDonagh on the other hand allowed non-uniformed men to make their escape before offering the company’s surrender.⁵¹¹ Women demanded the right to stay on and surrender with the men, in fact, they were formally ordered to do so by superior members of Cumann na mBan. ‘Miss McNamara ordered that we were to surrender with the men, and we all did with one exception. We marched behind the men... On our way... I picked up a rook rifle and carried it the rest of the way but I had to surrender it on orders from the British Officer’.⁵¹² By carrying a gun, even if she had not fired a shot all week, Margaret Kennedy was making a claim upon the British officer to treat her as an armed combatant and soldier rather than as an auxiliary, a brave action given the subsequent treatment of the armed insurgents. It should, however, be noted that Kennedy was fighting in the distillery under the command of Con Colbert, who, as Ward points out ‘was more inclined to view women as comrades’ due to his earlier experiences in Markievicz’s youth group Na Fianna Eireann.⁵¹³ The same attitude was not held by all the Commandants and leaders of the various outposts. Right up until the last moments of fighting female combatants continued to take notes from rank and file soldiers for later delivery to their friends and relatives.⁵¹⁴ And, just as they had throughout the Rising, they couriered messages between the various outposts, often at great personal

⁵¹⁰ James Kenny, WS/174, p. 6.

⁵¹¹ Prof. Michael Hayes, WS/215, NAI, p. 5.

⁵¹² Miss Margaret Kennedy, WS/185, p. 3.

⁵¹³ Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 115.

⁵¹⁴ Miss Louise Gavan Duffy, WS/216, pp. 8-9.

risk, to maintain what had, at times, been one of the only effective communication channels in order to communicate news of the surrender. Despite all of these actions however, Pearse still addressed the rebels and explained that 'in order to save the lives of the women it had been decided to surrender'.⁵¹⁵ Clearly, right up until the last moments of the Rising the role of women was not only causing confusion but also conflict. The failure of the chain of command was such that, at some of the outposts, rebels learned of the surrender from civilians. Joseph McDonough remembered that some of his compatriots wanted to shoot the civilian in question for spreading false rumours.⁵¹⁶ This example of hostility towards civilians was not an isolated incident. When civilians rushed the gate at the North Dublin Union James Foran took the gun of the Volunteer on the gate and warned them to 'get back. You wouldn't come to our assistance. Now you are rushing up'.⁵¹⁷

Large numbers of the Dublin populace roundly condemned the rebels. They lined the streets as the surrendered troops were marched to Richmond Barracks to heckle, spit, and tear at their uniforms, the latter of which many saw as an affront to their male relatives who were fighting abroad in the British army.⁵¹⁸ Witnesses recalled being 'jeered' and the crowd's 'hostile' attitude.⁵¹⁹ Whilst 'some of [the crowd] knelt and blessed [the rebels]... more of them cursed [the Volunteers]'.⁵²⁰ Other Volunteers recorded the almost unanimous anger shown towards them as they were

⁵¹⁵ Simon Donnelly, WS/481, NAI, p. 8.

⁵¹⁶ Joseph McDonagh, WS/1082, p. 5.

⁵¹⁷ James Foran, WS/243, p. 8.

⁵¹⁸ Simon Donnelly, WS/481, p. 8.

⁵¹⁹ James Kenny, WS/141, NAI, p. 8.

⁵²⁰ Seamus Kenny, WS/158, p. 7.

marched to the North Wall citing the only exception as their 'own intimate friends'.⁵²¹ It was vital to the rebel's performance that they were accepted as a legitimate army. To be recognised as such would ensure that the rebels would be granted prisoner of war status and not be tried as common criminals as in the case of Roger Casement. Despite the efforts to achieve this through the use of flags, uniforms, chains of rank and command the civilians that lined the streets made it clear that they were not willing to accept the rebels as their army. Similarly, a large number of rebels had fought in either with no, or partial, uniform. This undermined the insistence of the leaders, laid down in the Proclamation, that the united band of rebels formed a single unified army.

Some civilians undermined the rebels in other ways. Andrew McDonnell was marching along Grafton Street in front of a 'huge crowd' that had assembled to see the Volunteers surrender when a woman 'cried: "Lord, look at the child going to be shot." Stepping into the road, she picked me up in her arms and moved back into the crowd, evidently with idea of getting me away to safety'.⁵²² However well intentioned the actions of this woman were they had the effect of publically emasculating McDonnell by failing to acknowledge him as a soldier and seeing him only as a gender neutral child who she could maternally protect. McDonnell's 'one idea was to go with my comrades and, in particular, the Commandant, as by that time I was willing to follow him anywhere. I kicked that good woman good and hard until she let me down, and then ran after the remnants of our army to surrender'.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Liam O' Flaithbheartaigh, WS/248, NAI, p. 5.

⁵²² Andrew McDonnell, WS/1768, p. 14.

⁵²³ Ibid.

Once the rebels had surrendered they were led away to Richmond Barracks, from where they were held in Mountjoy and Kilmainham prisons, before they were finally deported to England. Consequently, the rebels were removed from public space. The absence of these combatants will be shown, in the following chapter to be a vital factor in the way the Rising was narrated and understood in its aftermath. As, crucially, it meant the rebels were unable to control the ways in which the narrative of the Rising was constructed and circulated.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that confusion was an endemic feature of the Rising. This was a result of a lack of uniformed understanding amongst the rebels of what form the republic, they were fighting to achieve would take and, moreover, under what terms one got to claim the rights and responsibilities of citizenship within the newly constituted body politic. Ultimately, this meant that, as a performance, the Rising was unintelligible to its audience. Civilians who witnessed the opening exchanges of the Rising initially responded in the same interactive way they had with the political street theatre that had been characteristic in the city throughout the *fin de siècle* and went to witness and engage with events that were unfolding. However, as the week wore on and the dangers of fire and heavy bombardment increased, civilians increasingly withdrew from the open spaces of the city.

With news of the surrender, Dubliners took to the streets again to take in, and make sense of their new landscape. Dublin had been irrevocably changed, and, for a populace accustomed to expressing themselves through their engagement with urban space the Rising brought with it the challenge of how to be a public citizen in its aftermath. It is to this renegotiation of space, and the ways in which narratives of the Rising were constructed and communicated that the attentions of this thesis now turns.

3

Ephemera and the Interpretation of the Easter Rising

In the years following the Easter Rising there was a seismic shift in public opinion towards the rebels, and advanced nationalism more generally. The conscription crisis, more open support from the Catholic hierarchy, and the final humiliating defeat of the Irish Parliamentary Party, marked by the failure of the All-Ireland Convention of 1917, undoubtedly all played a significant part in the growth of popular support for Sinn Féin.⁵²⁴ These factors, of course supplement what is widely regarded as the most significant cause in the rapid growth of support for republicanism, that of the executions of the Rising's leadership and subsequent internment of 1,794 men and seventy-three women.⁵²⁵ However, what is rarely explored is the significance of *how* individuals mediated *their* responses to the Rising and executions to bring about these changed attitudes towards advanced nationalism. Moreover, the specific ways in which a narrative of the Rising

⁵²⁴ Githens-Mazer, *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising*, pp. 170-206; Greaves, *1916 as History*, p. 34; Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 190; Barry Flynn, *Pawns in the Game: Irish Hunger Strikes, 1912-1981* (Cork, 2011), p. 22-24 and Pauric Travers, *Settlements and Divisions: Ireland, 1870-1922* (Dublin, 1988), p. 108. Following the British, incorrectly, labelling the Rising the Sinn Féin Rebellion, the hitherto relatively insignificant organisation became recognised as the umbrella group for the majority of advanced nationalist organisations.

⁵²⁵ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 49.

was created and circulated should not be overlooked. Earnie O'Malley describes how the process of making the Rising intelligible began. He wrote

Without guidance of direction, moving as if to clarify itself, nebulous, forming, reforming, the strange rebirth took shape. It was manifest in flags, badges, songs, speech, all seemingly superficial signs. It was as if the inarticulate attempted to express themselves in any way or by any method; later would come organization and cool-headed reason.⁵²⁶

As this chapter argues, public displays of support for the rebels and ephemera were used to facilitate the construction of a common way to interpret the Rising. People were able to mediate their identities and personal experiences through, and in relationships with, these public displays and ephemera. In doing so, they were able to negotiate and reconcile their attitudes towards the Rising, and advanced nationalism more generally, within a larger narrative framework.

Doubtless it is true that advanced nationalist organisations played a crucial role in shaping the narratives of the Rising that emerged. However, those of different political creeds also competed with the advanced nationalists for ownership of the legacy and symbols of the rebellion. The approach of Sinn Féin was to engage a more populist narrative of the Rising and, in some ways, accommodated their audience, constituted of the broader Irish populace, by providing the ephemera that typified modern modes of popular communication and political and emotional engagement. Such efforts will be considered alongside alternative ways in which ephemera and space was used to create a narrative discourse of the Rising in its immediate aftermath. The ephemera that were produced following the

⁵²⁶ Earnie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound: A Personal History of Ireland's War of Independence* (London, 1937), p. 47.

Rising was similar to the types of items that people would have already used to mediate their experiences. For example, illustrated souvenir publications bore similarities to the programmes people collected from their theatre visits and went towards creating a greater understanding of the Rising as both spectacle and performance. In addition, the production of illustrated memorial cards which people placed in their prayer books facilitated private reflections on the costs and sacrifices of the Rising that were in keeping with Catholic traditions of commemorating the dead.

While other authors have hinted at the widespread existence of ephemera, few have dedicated more than a few cursory lines to it and most have added it as a narrative flourish to colour their work rather than to provide a detailed interrogation of its role, purpose and development.⁵²⁷ One of the few scholars to investigate the role that ephemera played in the aftermath of the Easter Rising is Clair Wills. She states that ‘songs and badges were an antidote to the repressions of martial law, and were very hard to police’.⁵²⁸ She continues to explain that ‘many of these items were mass-produced by Sinn Fein, making the most of the opportunities for propaganda. But for the people who bought them more was at stake than political posturing – they were invested with emotional charge’.⁵²⁹ What Wills points towards is the way in which ephemera had begun to facilitate the expression of changing political, and emotional, opinion towards the

⁵²⁷ Alter, ‘Symbols of Irish Nationalism’, p. 16 and Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, p. 55.

⁵²⁸ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 105. Whilst songs aren’t ephemera there is clear evidence that the lyrics to these nationalist anthems were produced on handbills and songsheets which are classified as ephemera for the purposes of this research. See also, Ewan Morris, *Our Own Devices: National Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 1-37.

⁵²⁹ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 105.

rebels in the aftermath of their executions. Furthermore it is implied that, whilst the items may have been produced for propagandistic purposes, those purchasing the items had an individual relationship with that object and used it to reflect a more personal view of the events and consequences of the Rising.⁵³⁰ However, even Wills' account is limited to a few pages and does not stop to interrogate the vast complexities of the relationship between the individual, the object, and the wider community. Nor does the existing scholarship explore what the memorabilia communicated to the owner, and, in turn, aided the owner to convey to others in the community.

In addition to a consideration of the ephemera and keepsakes, which contributed towards the construction of a more monolithic narrative of the Easter Rising, it is vital to address the display and modification of these items. In doing so it is possible to see how the geographic space of Dublin city itself was vital in the renegotiation of attitudes towards the Rising, and advanced nationalism more widely, following May 1916. Consequently, this chapter will address the acquisition of three main types of objects relating to the Rising. The first of these will be mass produced goods, an exploration of which will show how advanced nationalists competed alongside commercial interests to create a narrative of the Rising. It will also show how the authorities responded to the circulation of such ephemera. The remaining two types have been classified, in this research, as relics. Firstly, consideration is given to relics relating to individual participants, and

⁵³⁰ Morris, *Our Own Devices*, pp. 29-32. For a more detailed theoretical understanding of how individuals relate to objects in order to project and mediate their identity within a community see Sofaer, 'Introduction', pp. 1-11 and Neil Jarman, 'Material of Culture, Fabric of Identity' in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (London, 1998), pp. 121-145.

particularly those executed for their part, in the Rising. Secondly, relics of the city that was partially destroyed as a result of the Rising will be considered. What these relics represented was a more personalised and unique souvenir. Their uniqueness thus imbued the object with a more profound emotional charge and, furthermore placed the owner in closer proximity to the Rising and those who fought in it. Thus, these relics appeared to offer authenticity, both of narrative and of experience. Finally, this chapter turns its attentions to the way in which these ephemera and relics were displayed, modified, and used to assist in the reclamation of public space in the Rising's aftermath.

Mass Produced Ephemera

The ephemera considered in this chapter was made and consumed between 1916 and 1917. The materials considered in this thesis constitute only a slim sample of the material that circulated. This is precisely the nature of ephemera. For the most part it was designed to be disposable; in other cases it was considered to be seditious and therefore destroyed, and, finally, it has frequently been considered unremarkable by those compiling archives.

The majority of the objects under consideration in this chapter were created, and in circulation, during the period of internment. The internment of vast numbers of men and women, many of whom had played no part in the Easter Rising, was seen by many as evidence of indiscriminate persecution by the British state and an invalid intrusion into the private

lives of many Irish families.⁵³¹ Additionally, the deprivation that the removal of a major contributor to the household economy brought hardened attitudes against the British authorities. Crucially, the production and distribution of this ephemera while the internees were absent meant that many of the myths and narratives that were created to make sense of the Easter Rising originated when those who had played an active part were not there to contribute their recollections. Instead, it was women from the advanced nationalist community, often related to prominent men within the movement, and men who had avoided internment, who were left to create a legacy of the Rising, a fact that was recognised by the Under Secretary for Ireland when he noted,

There is unquestionably a great deal of sympathy in the City for the Rebels and it is gaining ground. This feeling is being seditiously fostered by the women... The executed leaders are spoken of as 'martyrs' and it is possible that attempts may be made to further stir up public feeling by means of memorial processions, public meetings and the erection of monuments.⁵³²

However, it must be remembered that the women of Cumann na mBan operated alongside commercial interests and the competing voices of other political bodies, of both nationalist and loyalist persuasion.⁵³³

In fact, the interned men often expressed feelings of being forgotten. One interned rebel at Frongoch wrote to James Ryan in October 1916 to say he was 'delighted to hear you write so frequently to the boys in the camp.

⁵³¹ David Fitzpatrick, 'Ireland since 1870', in R.F. Foster (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), p. 240.

⁵³² 5617/11840, CSORP 1916. See also, Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 118. It should be noted that female revolutionaries had been required to take on this role during previous instances of internment. This is a point made Joseph Valente illustrates in relation to the Ladies Land League in Valente, *The Myth of Manliness*, p. 48.

⁵³³ Kostick and Collins, *The Easter Rising*, p. 114 and Raines, *Commodity Culture*, pp. 206-207.

With a small number of exceptions the experience of all here has been that they have been almost completely forgotten by their friends'.⁵³⁴ The jails and camps that housed the internees between 1916-1917 have been referred to as republican universities.⁵³⁵ They were organised and heavily politicised places that had the effect of radicalising those who had been incorrectly identified as a rebel and interned, whilst also providing a space for intense contact between those who were already militant.⁵³⁶ Those in the camps made constant efforts to get news of their protests and campaigns to supporters in Ireland. Men refused to answer to their names and numbers on parade, engaged in hunger strikes over their conditions and, through letters to their solicitors, constantly lobbied about issues such as the conditions and quantity of meat they were given.⁵³⁷ Songs written by Seamus Hughes, who was at the time a prisoner in Lewes jail, show how focused the men were towards their continuing duty

Comrades! But ours the solemn duty jealously to guard
The fame of our brothers who in glory proudly died in Ireland's
name.
By our lives all doubts dispelling we will slanders dismay
Justly wring from lips unwilling as the dead were so as they
Comrades! Ours the solemn duty jealously to guard the flame.⁵³⁸

As this unfinished composition shows, the interned men felt as though it was their duty to preserve the memory of those who lost their life in April

⁵³⁴ Letter to James Ryan by unknown correspondent dated 22 October 1916, P88/42 (1), James Ryan Collection, UCDA.

⁵³⁵ Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Irish Modernity*, p. 140 and Sean O' Mahony, *Frongoch: University of Revolution* (Dublin, 1987).

⁵³⁶ Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 396; and R.D. Edwards, 'The Achievement of 1916', in O.D. Edwards and F. Pyle (eds), *1916: The Easter Rising* (London, 1968), p. 211.

⁵³⁷ Conditions at Frongoch Internment Camp, CD 227/3/8, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH and Handbill of Treatment of Irish Prisoners in English Prison Camps November 1916, CD 218/2, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

⁵³⁸ Unfinished composition entitled 'The Trust the Duty' from an album of songs and hymns, P148, Seamus Hughes Collection, UCDA.

1916 and, the narrative of the Rising as a whole. However, they remained isolated from news about how the Rising was being (re)interpreted.⁵³⁹ A prisoner by the nickname 'Mort' wrote to James Ryan asking 'has the general body of the people changed very much of late? We hear nothing here. Of course there are rumours and rumours but none have ever come true'.⁵⁴⁰ Mort's correspondence goes some way to encapsulating the problem faced by the internees. Many, whether as a result of their participation in the Rising or as a result of the experiences in the camps, saw themselves at the forefront of a movement, imprisoned soldiers who alone had the power to tell the narrative of the Rising and its leaders. However, during their internment they remained totally isolated from society at large and unable to guide, contribute, or even acquire knowledge of the narratives that were circulating in their absence. By the time they returned home myths of heroic sacrifice had been culturally absorbed. Michael Brennan for instance, noted the 'bewildering' contrast between the physical violence of the separation women who had 'howled insults [and] pelted us with anything handy' when the rebels were shipped out of Ireland, and the 'crowd numbering several thousand who cheered themselves hoarse and embarrassed me terribly by carrying [me] on their shoulders through the streets' eight months later.⁵⁴¹

One such narrative that helped to create a common understanding of the events of Easter Week was one of sacrifice and regeneration. Succinctly

⁵³⁹ Although, it should be noted that songsheets were in circulation during this period that explicitly advertise that they were composed by rebels interned in English prisons. So, whilst the rebels may not have had access to information about how attitudes to the Rising was changing, there was an appetite in Ireland for songs by the rebels that was met. See, Songsheets printed by prisoners, 17MU/3N12/08, Kilmainham Gaol Museum and, 'I don't mind if I do', A political skit by the Rajah of Frongoch, 18MU/1C14/28, KGM.

⁵⁴⁰ Letter from 'Mort' to James Ryan dated 9 October 1916, P88/37, James Ryan Collection, UCDA.

⁵⁴¹ Lieut.-Gen. Michael Brennan, WS/1068, NAI, p. 16.

put, this interpretation of the Rising presented the rebels as individuals who willingly sacrificed themselves in order that their blood might breathe new life into the nation and inspire a new generation to take up arms in the name of Ireland. This narrative placed the Rising within the culturally absorbed teleology of previous abortive attempts at rebellion against British rule. However, it also left open the possibility of future attempts by placing it within a constantly reviving framework of generational attempts at independence.⁵⁴² It is critical to understand that the accuracy of this interpretation is not what is important; rather it is the fact that it became an increasingly prevalent way of explaining the Rising. Furthermore, ephemera were integral to the way that this narrative gained such currency and circulated so widely.

The advanced nationalist press was extremely active in producing newspapers, journals, handbills, postcards, and assorted ephemera to promote a favourable narrative of the Rising that emphasised the chivalry, camaraderie and sacrifice of those who fought.⁵⁴³ Nonetheless, it is imperative that the competition they faced from parties who were concerned purely by commercial opportunity is not underestimated, not least because the commercial viability of producing this ephemera points to a market for these goods and a profound public interest in the events of Easter Week 1916 and those who participated in it. The Dublin Newsagents,

⁵⁴² For an explanation and critique of the narrative interpretation of the Rising as a blood sacrifice see, Moran, *Staging the Rising*, p. 7; Cannon-Harris, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama*, pp. 1-25; David George Boyce, '1916: Interpreting the Rising', in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996), p. 171; Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, pp. 2-15 and F. L. Radford, 'King, Pope, and Hero-Martyr: "Ulysses" and the Nightmare of Irish History', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 15:4 (1978), p. 279.

⁵⁴³ Githens-Mazer, *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising*, pp. 142-143.

Booksellers and Stationers Association, for instance, were keen to stress to the Irish Chief Secretary the negative financial implications, caused to their members, by inconsistent information from the government about what constituted seditious material.⁵⁴⁴ This indicates that the establishment tried hard to suppress material that might lead to increased support for Sinn Féin. Conversely, they were also encouraged to acknowledge that they would have to allow some material, produced for commercial consumption, to flow more freely. Indeed, a number of enquiries and complaints that passed through the Irish Chief Secretary's office related to the fact that there was inconsistency in what was considered to be prohibited and the enforcement of those prohibitions.⁵⁴⁵ The authorities also attempted to reconcile what constituted seditious material by considering, not only the producer, but also the consumer. For instance, the Dublin Metropolitan Police reported in July 1916 that Irish Republican stamps were on sale.⁵⁴⁶ However, it was thought that their sale and purchase was 'merely a speculative investment by dealers in their own interest, and not for the benefit of the Sinn Féin movement'.⁵⁴⁷ Consequently, the Under Secretary was of the opinion that he saw 'no objection to these stamps being sold. They have no value measured upon them'.⁵⁴⁸ The reason for the Under Secretary's lack of concern appears to stem from the fact that the stamps were being sold by antiques and art dealers.⁵⁴⁹ It would appear, therefore, that even ephemera containing explicitly seditious messages, or in the case of the stamps, had a direct link

⁵⁴⁴ 5609/7145, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁵⁴⁵ 5617/11840, 5621/13987, 5642/25286, Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ These stamps were produced during the Rising by advanced nationalists.

⁵⁴⁷ 5621/13867, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

to the Rising itself, were permissible depending on the intended consumer and the pedigree of the vendor. There is evidence, for instance, that those who brought copies of the *Irish War News* were doing so as a speculative investment for the future.⁵⁵⁰ However, these appear to have been sold in newsagents and were confiscated as seditious.⁵⁵¹ In November 1916 divisional reports were requested by the Chief Secretary's office from the D.M.P giving figures of seditious material seized and destroyed since the rebellion in order to address the concerns of the Dublin Newsagents and Stationers Association.⁵⁵² In total the reports noted the seizure of; 236 copies of *Ballads and Marching Songs of Ireland*, 3900 copies of *Tracts for our Times*, 1398 copies of *Thomas MacDonagh's Last Inspiring Address*, 272 photo groups of 'Irish Republican Leaders', and small collections of other miscellaneous items.⁵⁵³ Interestingly, 243 copies of photo groups of rebel leaders 'without seditious matter thereon' were to be returned to the vendors. These photo groups were, in fact, postcards. Furthermore, in all surviving examples in archives the text below images of this type provided information such as the subject's name, role in the Rising, date of execution or their rank in what was alternately called the 'Army of the Irish Republic' or the 'Irish Republican Army'.⁵⁵⁴ The implied acceptance of the legitimacy of the IRA could certainly be seen as seditious and, in certain circumstances, postcards bearing this type of information were, in other instances

⁵⁵⁰ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

⁵⁵¹ Photos of 7 "seditious" newspapers from the collection of T. W. Moran c. 1916, MS 8494(2), NLI.

⁵⁵² 5630/26071, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ See the Powell Press Postcards of Patrick Pearse and Joseph Plunkett respectively. Postcards of the Easter Rising leaders, CD 256/3/1-8, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

suppressed, once again highlighting the inconsistency with which material was prohibited.

Postcards, along with souvenir publications containing pictures, appear to have been the most prominent printed ephemera to circulate in the aftermath of the Rising. They played an educational role. As the *Leader* pointed out it was the circulation of the names alongside the corresponding image of the executed rebels that made them known to the public.⁵⁵⁵ The nationalist publication pointed out that prior to this 'many of them [were] absolutely unknown to the public... [and] some of them were absolutely unknown to us even as names'.⁵⁵⁶

These illustrated items obviously circulated alongside the extensive newspaper coverage that also made use of photographs of the principle leaders.⁵⁵⁷ Songbooks, anthologies of poetry, published memoirs and posters were also distributed although it appears that the majority of these were produced by republicans and were treated as seditious by the authorities.⁵⁵⁸ Consequently, they appear to have disseminated in smaller volumes. These items are in addition to the political handbills that, whilst not intended as ephemera, were kept and contained within scrapbooks by various owners in amongst other ephemera, photographs, newspaper clippings, and their own writing to comprise a more complete personal

⁵⁵⁵ *The Leader*, 20 May 1916.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Although it should be highlighted that a number of the more prominent figures were known within nationalist circles as Gaelic enthusiasts even if they were not known as militant republicans.

⁵⁵⁷ *The Weekly Irish Times*, 29 April, 6 May and 13 May 1916.

⁵⁵⁸ For an illustrative example see A battle hymn dedicated to the ICA, 18MU/1C14/29, KGM; A Voice of Insurgency by Maeve Cavanagh, 18BK/1J21/06, KGM; Reprint with Photo of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic 24 April 1916, CD 227/3/1, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

narrative.⁵⁵⁹ These particular items will, however, be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. What is startling is how quickly the ephemera was produced and available on the open market. Eason's were advertising their sale of souvenir picture albums containing a 'view of the principle streets destroyed during the Revolt, portraits of the Leaders, etc.' in the *Leader* on the 12 August 1916.⁵⁶⁰ Likewise, a Prime Minister's question posed by Mr. Flavin about the sale in Dublin of booklets and photographs dealing with the rebellion was asked on the 31st July 1916, suggesting that the albums had been in circulation prior to this date.⁵⁶¹ Additionally, the question was about the fact that three leading unionist publishers had produced the booklets in question. The fact that unionist publishers were producing commemorative albums illustrates the point that advanced nationalists were competing with opposing agendas in their efforts to create an interpretive myth of the Rising. The myths and narratives that grew up around the Rising during 1916 and 1917 focused on two principle areas. Firstly, a great deal of attention was given to the combatants and their families, and specifically the executed leaders. Secondly, the destruction of Dublin city caused during the Rising was strongly emphasised. In both cases ephemera, in particular images were used to familiarise the public with a particular stock of information, presented to form a holistic narrative of the events of Easter Week and the subsequent executions. The factual information and images recorded in these ephemera were, almost without

⁵⁵⁹ Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637; Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 2, MS 5638, NLI; Scrapbook of Frank Martin, MS 33,695/1, NLI; and Scrapbook by unknown compiler, MS 5818, NLI.

⁵⁶⁰ *The Leader*, 12 August 1916.

⁵⁶¹ 5620/13271, CSORP 1916, NAI.

exception, identical. However, differences in the presentation and order of the material, alongside significant differences in the subjective statements that were made, give a clear indication of the ways in which the public were exposed to numerous different competing interpretations of events.

The Powell Press, for example, which came into existence in 1916, produced postcards depicting figures from the Easter Rising. This set of postcards is by far the most commonly represented within the archives and appears to be the only series attributed to the press. With the exception of its registered address nothing else is known about the company.⁵⁶² It seems reasonably clear from the respect given to the rank of individuals and the use of the phrase Irish Republican Army within the inscriptions on the postcards that they had sympathetic opinions of the Rising. There is also some evidence to suggest that in certain instances the authorities considered these postcards seditious material.⁵⁶³ Sadly though it is not clear if those responsible for the postcard production were members of advanced nationalist organisations such as Sinn Féin, who as Clair Wills points out, were active in the production of memorabilia, or just capitalising on demand for ephemera and information about the Rising.⁵⁶⁴ The Keogh Bros, whose business started in 1912, and who operated from two premises in central Dublin, supplied the majority of the photographs used for the postcards and it was these same images that would be replicated on nearly all of the ephemera produced.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² F.E Dixon: *The Printers and Publishers of Irish Postcards*, MS 24,585, NLI.

⁵⁶³ 5621/13987, CSORP 1916.

⁵⁶⁴ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 105.

⁵⁶⁵ A far smaller number of images were also supplied by Layfaette.



[Fig 1] Powell Press postcard depicting Patrick Henry Pearse. CD/256/3/3, Contemporary Documents Collection, Bureau of Military History. Image reproduced by kind permission of the Bureau of Military History. The text reads 'P.H. Pearse. Commandant-General of the Army of the Irish Republic, Executed May 3rd, 1916. One of the signatories of the "Irish Republic Proclamation."'

The postcards are approximately four inches by six in size and show a photograph of the individual edged in a black line half a centimetre in thickness. Above this is written 'Irish Rebellion, May 1916' and directly under it two to three lines of text detailing the fate of the individual depicted

[Fig 1]. Thirty-two individuals were depicted in the series.⁵⁶⁶ Fourteen men executed for their part in the Rising are shown, along with three men killed in action, and twelve men who received sentences of penal servitude. Also included are images of Countess Markievicz, Grace Plunkett, and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington. As around ninety men initially received the death sentence for their part in the Rising it is clear that some form of selection criteria for inclusion was in place. Who to depict, in some instances, appears to have more to do with an individual's relationship to one of the signatories than their prominence during the Rising itself. Equally, there does not appear to be any logic to the fact that Henry O'Hanrahan, who was active during the fighting, was depicted on account of his brother, Michael, having been executed; and yet, neither George nor John Plunkett, both of who faced the same circumstances as Henry O'Hanrahan featured on the postcards. The only discernable reason behind this particular choice is that both George and John Plunkett are mentioned on the postcard depicting their father. However, their case is illustrative of the process of selection that was at work. Moreover, Count Plunkett, whilst a prominent nationalist in his own right, was included as 'father of Joseph Plunkett, who was executed, and of George and John Plunkett, sentenced to Penal Servitude'.⁵⁶⁷ Furthermore, whilst Count Plunkett was detained in Richmond Barracks and later deported, as the postcard notes, he does not appear to have been an active combatant during Easter Week. His significance, it is argued, comes from his

⁵⁶⁶ Irish Republican Army; Leaders in the Insurrection, May 1916, CD 131/2/2, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

⁵⁶⁷ Scrapbook of Frank Martin, MS 33,695/1.

importance to the narrative of family sacrifice that evolved after the event and that the postcards themselves helped to create.

The extent to which, if at all, the Easter Rising was intended to be a blood sacrifice has been thoroughly revised.⁵⁶⁸ However, in the Rising's aftermath, a narrative quickly developed that utilised a discourse of martyrdom and male sacrifice. Within this discourse it was the blood of the martyred male that was intended to give new blood to the nation and instil in future generations the necessity for armed insurrection.⁵⁶⁹ However, it was the female embodiment of Ireland, be it Cathleen Ni Houlihan, the Shan Van Vocht, Roisin Dubh or one of the multitude of other symbolic female representations of Ireland, that was essential for the transformation of the dying man's blood into a regenerative promise. Susan Cannon Harris claims that,

[t]he idea of regeneration through blood sacrifice privileges the intangible rewards of death over the actual living body. Making what Pearse calls "the ultimate sacrifice" requires the victim to decide to a value larger, as yet illusory goal above the immediate needs and desires of his own body. The conjunction of ritual violence and fertility helps participate in this process of disavowal by projecting corporeality and its attendant suffering onto the female body, leaving the male disembodied and therefore fundamentally unscathed. At the moment of death the martyr's body drops out of the narrative, and its pain is transferred to the female figure whose job it is to turn those death throes into birth pangs.⁵⁷⁰

The extent to which those participating in the Easter Rising understood themselves to be acting out this discourse is questionable.

However, in the wake of the Rising, and in the rebels' absence due to

⁵⁶⁸ Greaves, *1916 as History* and Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse, the Triumph of Failure* (London, 1977).

⁵⁶⁹ Judith Pryor, *Constitutions: Writing Nations, Reading Difference* (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 69-71.

⁵⁷⁰ Cannon-Harris, *Gender and Modern Irish Drama*, p. 23.

internment, the language of sacrifice and regeneration was one narrative, which helped to create a common understanding of the events of Easter week, 1916. It was propagated, in particular, by the circulation in various printed formats, of the final poems and letters of Patrick Pearse, in particular the one written to his mother while he was in Kilmainham Jail.⁵⁷¹ On the one hand, a narrative of blood sacrifice appeared to place the Rising with the culturally absorbed teleology of previous abortive attempts at rebellion against British rule.⁵⁷² Thus, it became more contained and readily understood by the populace.⁵⁷³ However, it also left open the possibility of future insurrections by placing it within a constantly reviving framework of generational attempts at independence. The poetry, letters, and final addresses of the executed leaders, Patrick Pearse in particular, did help to create a narrative of willing blood sacrifice but images of the leaders, such as those on the Powell Press postcards, helped to make the rebels recognisable as martyrs [Fig 1]. That being said, there is little about the images of the men that are particularly noteworthy. Except to note that, each time a rebel is represented, say, for example, Thomas Clarke, the same image is used. Across all the ephemera that have been consulted there are very few exceptions to this. The constancy of the images used was precisely what aided in making the male rebels recognisable. Images have 'a power that succeeds where rational discourse fails; [they] persuade in ways that reason can not do; and [they] influence us in a manner that resists rational

⁵⁷¹ There are multiple examples of reproductions of Pearse's final poem and letter to his mother throughout the archives consulted during the course of this research. An illustrative example can be viewed in the Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

⁵⁷² Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp. 139-150.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

analysis'.⁵⁷⁴ Elsie Mahaffy for instance, felt that her two pictures of Patrick Pearse helped her to 'realise this man'.⁵⁷⁵ It would appear that Patrick Pearse also recognised the particular value of images, in particular images of nationalist martyrs, to communicate political ideas. When asked in February 1916 to give his consent to his images being used on the front cover of a publication he wrote 'the souvenir is a very good idea, but I think a portrait of Emmet would be better (as well as handsomer) on the cover. After I am hanged my portrait will be interesting, but not before'.⁵⁷⁶

In addition to those executed for their part in the Rising three men shot in action, Sean Connolly, The O'Rahilly and Thomas Wafer, each have their image on a postcard. There is nothing about their images that mark them as distinct from the other men depicted with the exception of the small piece of text below their image stating the date of their execution or that they fell in action. This lack of distinction is further emphasised by the almost exact balance between the depictions of those who died, and those who survived. The youth of the dead Sean Connolly and Cornelius Colbert is mirrored by the youth of John F. McEntee and Thomas Ashe. The military uniforms of the deceased Edward Daly, The O'Rahilly and J. J. Heuston are matched by the image of Eamon deValera. In the case of Michael O'Hanrahan his image is directly related to that of his brother Henry O'Hanrahan down to the garland of Shamrock worn on the lapel of their coats. Likewise the Malin brothers, Michael and James, also have photos that bare striking

⁵⁷⁴ Seán Farrell Moran, 'Images, Icons and the Practice of Irish History' in Lawrence. W. McBride, *Images, Icons and the Irish Nationalist Imagination* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 167-168.

⁵⁷⁵ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

⁵⁷⁶ Letter to Seamus Doyle from Patrick Pearse dated 17 February 1916, CD 127/3, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

resemblances to one another. It is possible to read the images of the men as presenting archetypes of rebel masculinity as well as individuals. For example, for each rebel in military dress who died, there is another depicted as ready to take his place.

However, it is the two images of women amongst the series, those of Countess Markievicz and 'Mrs Joseph Plunkett' nee Grace Gifford, that are crucial to an understanding of the Powell Press postcards as ephemera that aided in the construction of the aforementioned discourse, of the Easter Rising as a blood sacrifice that created regenerative promise for Ireland, during the period of internment.

Despite the fact that Countess Markievicz [Fig 2] was an active, armed combatant in the Easter Rising the image chosen for the postcard was not one of the several photographs of her in the military dress of the Irish Citizen Army holding a revolver [Fig 3]. Images which, it should be noted were also taken by the Keogh Brothers who supplied the photographs for the postcards.



[Fig 2] Powell Press postcard depicting Countess Markievicz, CD 256/3/7, Contemporary Documents Collection, Bureau of Military History. Image reproduced by kind permission of the Bureau of Military History. The text reads 'Countess Markievicz, (Who took a prominent part in the Rebellion, Stephen's Green Area). Sentenced to death; Sentence commuted to penal servitude for life.'

[Fig 3] Photograph of Countess Markievicz in the uniform of the ICA., P7, Photography Collection, Bureau of Military History. Image reproduced by kind permission of the Bureau of Military History.

Instead, it was a photo taken from her days among the Dublin Castle elite [Fig 2] in which she wears a resplendent ball gown and stares ethereally into an unseen distance, mimicking almost exactly the focused gaze of Patrick Pearse's image [Fig 1]. Her head is looking out over her left shoulder. This suggests to the viewer that she is looking forward towards the images of those men who were interned, intimating that she is looking towards Ireland's future, which is symbolised by the men who will one day return to Ireland to fill the void left by those executed for their part in the

Rising. Additionally, the caption below her name acknowledges only that she 'took a prominent part in the rebellion, Stephen's Green area' and that her death sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. There is no acknowledgement that she was the only woman sentenced to death for her part in the Rising. Nor is there any acknowledgement that her sentence was only commuted to avoid public outcry over the execution of a woman. Over seventy individuals had their initial death sentences commuted to ones of penal servitude when the unpopularity of the executions became apparent. However, Countess Markievicz and Eamon deValera are unique examples of two individuals who would have certainly been executed were it not for, in the first instance, the individual's sex and in the latter, a technicality of dual nationality. It is interesting therefore to note that whilst Markievicz takes central position within the sequence of postcards, appearing as she does, immediately after those executed and directly before those interned, there is nothing particularly noteworthy about the sequential placement of deValera's image in any of the collections seen whilst researching this thesis. One would expect, perhaps, that his image should directly follow or precede that of the Countesses but this is not the case in any collection of these images I have come across. A full-length photograph depicts Markievicz. This is in contrast to the men who are shown only from the chest upwards, thus becoming visually disembodied.⁵⁷⁷ The Countess's portrait was taken in a domestic scene where her midriff, framed by a hand on her hip sit directly in the middle of our line of vision. The visual reminder of her fertility

⁵⁷⁷ All the men are depicted in this way with one exception. Joseph Plunkett was represented twice in the Powell Press postcards series and, on one of those occasions, it was with a full length image of him in his garden.

invokes the discourse of sacrificial martyrdom in which the images of the martyrs and the ideals they convey are translated directly into regenerative promise in the images of those serving sentences of penal servitude. This ultra-feminine representation of Markievicz also, as alluded to earlier, diminishes her military role in the Rising as an armed combatant that was still viewed by many as publically unacceptable. As the previous chapter of this thesis made clear, the role of women within the Rising was a source of great anxiety for many people combatant and non-combatant alike. In the aftermath of the event, situating these women within a narrative of the rebellion was a challenge. Markievicz's prominence in the fighting of Easter Week was such that her role, more than most, was harder to ignore. However, in the image chosen to represent the countess she becomes pacified, she is unarmed and her role in the Rising was muted despite the facts. In this image the Countess represents more than a veteran rebel of Easter week. She is transformed, in a similar way to Maude Gonne before her, into a physical embodiment of Cathleen Ni Houlihan. She becomes a representative of the ethereal, female gendered, and highly sexualised ideal of Ireland that, within the context of a narrative of blood sacrifice and regenerative promise, the martyrs died to liberate. In contrast Grace Gifford's identity is clearly and solely defined as the tragic wife of Joseph Plunkett [Fig 4].



[Fig 4] Powell Press postcard depicting Grace Plunkett from the Scrapbook of Frank Martin, MS/33,695/1, National Library of Ireland. Image reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Ireland. The text reads 'Mrs Joseph Plunkett (miss Grace Gifford), Who married Joseph Plunkett in Kilmainham Prison a few hours before his Execution on May 3rd, 1916.'

Indeed, 'Mrs Joseph Plunkett' is written directly under her portrait in the same bold type used to inscribe the individual's name on all of the postcards. Underneath this in a thinner font, used on the other postcards to provide ancillary information, is written (nee Grace Gifford). Unlike Markievicz, Grace Plunkett's gaze is focused directly at the viewer. She is

depicted from the waist upward in a modest dress, the loose fit and high neckline of which hide her figure completely. Her hair is respectably confined under a hat with a veil. Her hands are crossed on her lap with her right hand framing, and drawing focal attention to the wedding ring on her left. The wedding ring gives us the clue that, unlike other images in the series hers must have been taken after the Rising. Given this is the case; it may appear odd that she is not in mourning dress. However, an identical image on display at Kilmainham Gaol was annotated by Grace Plunkett stating that the dress she wears in this picture was the one she wore at her wedding to Joseph Plunkett. Despite this her image clearly conveys a young bride who must carry the burden of sacrifice in the name of Ireland. This is further emphasised by her wearing a man's watch in the image, which, the viewer is left to assume, is Joseph Plunkett's. The watch is highly significant, suggesting as it does, that Gifford literally wears the burden of her husband's martyrdom. The juxtaposing images of Grace Plunkett and Countess Markievicz depict perfectly the binary roles ascribed to females in the rigid discourse of nationalist martyrdom that solidified and circulated in narratives of the Rising in its aftermath. Markievicz comes to represent the abstract and ethereal beauty of Mother Ireland, calling on her sons to sacrifice themselves. Whereas, Plunkett represents the women of Ireland whose role was to bear the emotional burden of male martyrdom rather than taking in active role in the fight to secure Irish independence.

The Powell Press postcards can be seen as one example where a mass-produced collection of images were sold and consumed in order to create and distribute an interpretive framework of the Easter Rising. In this

particular instance that narrative was one in which the execution of the leaders was framed as an act of sacrifice that led in its wake a body of men willing to take up their mantle on their return to Ireland. Furthermore, it was an account that situated women, in the contrasting roles of a grieving widow who was bound to bear the burden of the men's sacrifice, and an ethereal embodiment of Ireland. However, a consideration of the ways in which the postcards were consumed illustrates the ways in which individuals used the images to communicate their own interpretations of the Rising. Additionally, it also demonstrates how these people subtly altered the narrative to personalise it to be more consistent with their own understanding.

The Powell Press postcards appear frequently in scrapbooks compiled by individuals who lived through the Rising. During the compilation of these items people frequently chose not to include the full set of images. This suggests that the compiler of the scrapbook was making a conscious choice about whom to represent, and in which order. For instance, Frank Martin appears to have arranged his collection of Powell Press postcards according to family group. He placed Patrick and William Pearse together, surrounding their images with other assorted ephemera that told the story of their executions. The material he includes emphasises Patrick Pearse's farewell to his mother in which he professes to have died willingly for Ireland. Martin also includes newspaper cuttings that refer to the brothers as 'unconquered and unconquerable: the brothers Pearse and the

saving of Ireland's soul'.⁵⁷⁸ Finally, he goes on to hand transcribe a poetic lament entitled *P.H. Pearse*, originally by Sean MacEntee.⁵⁷⁹ Like all the individuals who compiled scrapbooks, Frank Martin invested emotional and physical labour in its construction. He made active decisions about its layout and presentation that indicate an attempt to present a narrative. To build this narrative he took existing ephemera and modified it to suit his purposes. In the particular example described above, Martin has supplemented the Powell Press postcards of the brothers Pearse to strengthen and reiterate the message that they, and Patrick in particular, had willingly made a knowing sacrifice of himself in the name of Ireland. And, what is more, that it was the mother that he left behind who would bear the burden of her grief knowing that they had died for an independent republic. Martin goes on to invest a similar amount of effort on the pages of his scrapbook devoted to Thomas MacDonagh and James Connolly. In the pages he dedicates to Joseph Plunkett, whilst he writes and attaches fewer newspaper clippings to create a narrative he positions Plunkett alongside the postcard of Grace Plunkett, and his father, Count Plunkett. This has the effect of visually contextualising his execution in terms of its emotive impact on the family who survived him. Perhaps of almost equal interest are those for whom he merely includes the postcard with no additional information, principally, the remaining signatories of the Proclamation. The comparative lack of labour invested in these rebels has the effect of communicating a lesser degree of emotional connection to them. Or, at the very least, a

⁵⁷⁸ Scrapbook of Frank Martin, MS 33,695/1.

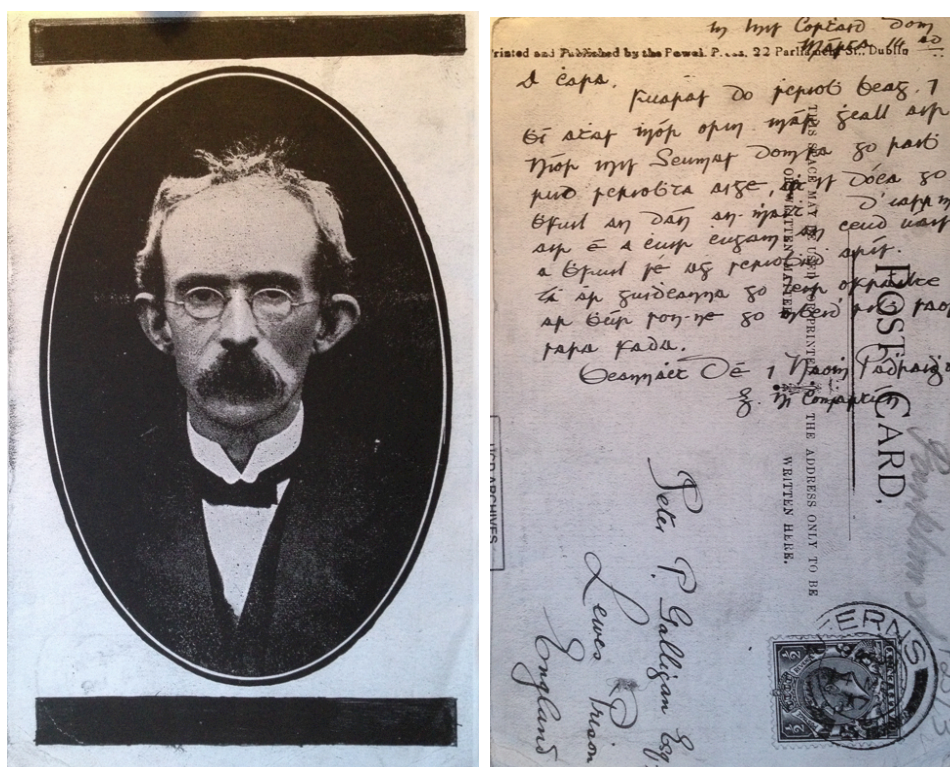
⁵⁷⁹ Ibid. and The Poems of John Francis MacEntee, 18BK/1B52/01, KGM.

greater degree of sympathy with the way the biographies of those for whom he did supplement the images were presented. There are other examples of scrapbooks and diaries in existence where individuals situated their own recollections of the executed men alongside more widely circulated posthumous biographies.⁵⁸⁰ Though sparse there are a sufficient number of scrapbooks still residing in archives to demonstrate that Martin was not unique in constructing his. These scrapbooks were an investment of emotional labour where a personalised narrative of the Rising and subsequent events was consciously constructed. Each piece of ephemera placed within these books was carefully selected, and by virtue of its placement, modified. Each item ceased to be an individual entity and became part of a new ephemeral narrative where each item supported a reading of the next. In sum, what the scrapbooks show, is that the mass produced ephemera, such as the Powell Press postcards, was not just passively consumed. Those who owned them understood that they presented a narrative of sacrifice during the Rising. These owners used and modified the assorted ephemera in circulation at the time to expand and supplement the message of each piece in such a way as it would more adequately their understanding and recollection of events.

The other somewhat obvious utility of the postcards was for them to be sent through the postal service. This required, by virtue of necessity, that the series be broken up into individual components thus disturbing any coherent narrative that could be drawn by looking at the postcards

⁵⁸⁰ Thomas King Moylan includes two addendums to his diary of Easter week in which he gives his impression of Cathal Brugha and William Pearse. Alongside the latter he included a printed example of Pearse's signature. See, *A Dubliner's Diary* by Thomas King Moylan, MS 9620.

collectively. An interesting example of this change can be illustrated by an example of the Powell Press postcards found amongst the holdings of the University College of Dublin Archive [Fig 5].



[Fig 5] Powell Press postcard of Thomas Clarke sent to Peter Paul Galligan in Lewes Jail c. 1916. [front and back], P25/3, Peter Paul Galligan Collection, University College Dublin. Image reproduced by kind permission of University College Dublin Archives.

The image is of Thomas Clarke. It is the only example that I have come across of a Powell Press postcard that had actually gone through the postal system. It was sent to Peter Galligan, an interned rebel, in Lewes Prison. This point is important for a number of reasons. All mail received by the prisoners was subject to censorship. This can be clearly seen in this example [Fig 5] where the phrase 'Irish Rebellion, May 1916; has been blocked out with the use of a black marker pen. The marker pen has also been used to

block out the description of Clarke's image which would have read 'Thomas J. Clarke, Executed May 3rd, 1916. One of the signatories of the 'Irish Republic Proclamation.' Additionally, the sender has written their message to Galligan in Irish. It is likely that the prison censors would have been unable to read the Gaelic script. It is surprising therefore that the postcard was delivered to Galligan as, in theory, it could have contained a prohibited message. Thus, it would have contravened the regulations of Lewes prison that stipulated 'all letters are read by the Prison Authorities. They must be legibly written and not crossed. Any which are of objectionable tendency, either to or from prisoners, or containing slang, or improper expressions, will be suppressed'.⁵⁸¹ As it is the message has been loosely translated by staff at the UCD archive as reading 'Postcard from G. Ni Comhartun, Enniscorthy, Co.Wexford, thanking him for his note, refers to a poem written by 'Seamus' which he doesn't think is very good but wants him to send it anyway. Praying for his home-coming'.⁵⁸² The postcard is a clear example of sedition. The sender is showing the prison authorities, whom they would have known would be processing this correspondence, that they show little regard for the rules and authority of the English penal system. Indeed, in sending the postcard they were incurring the risk of punishment as the regulations regarding communication with prisoners clearly stated that, 'persons attempting to clandestinely communicate with... prisoners are liable to fine and imprisonment, and any prisoner concerned in such

⁵⁸¹ Letter to Margaret Pearse snr. by M. Mervyn 'In lieu of a visit' from Lewes Prison, MS 8265/19, Pearse Papers, TCDA.

⁵⁸² Postcard to Peter Galligan, P25/3, Peter Galligan Papers, UCDA.

practises is liable to be severely punished'.⁵⁸³ They have chosen to send a postcard which brazenly depicts the principle signatory to the proclamation of the Irish republic and have written their message in Gaelic, despite the fact that there was no reason to try and obscure the message as it contains nothing that would be viewed as controversial and differs little in tone from other example of letters sent to interned men.⁵⁸⁴ Secondly, however, and perhaps more interestingly, the postcard is being used to educate the recipient and the other interned men (prisoners frequently shared letters and news from Ireland with one another), of the developments and attitudes towards the Rising in Ireland.⁵⁸⁵ When the men left Ireland for prisons in England it was clear to them that the Rising had been unsuccessful. It had not garnered public support and had been ultimately, and not unexpectedly, suppressed by the British forces. However, this postcard was one of the few ways of informing the prisoners that attitudes had begun to shift. Without the use of any words at all the postcard informs the recipient that images of the Rising's leaders were being popularised, that there was a demand for ephemera which shows positive engagement with the event as something to be memorialised.

It is also particularly interesting that the image selected was that of Thomas Clarke. Whilst it is important to consider the Powell Press postcards as a set it is also exciting to observe which images individuals selected when

⁵⁸³ Letter to Margaret Pearse snr. by M. Mervyn 'In lieu of a visit' from Lewes Prison, MS 8265/19, Pearse Papers.

⁵⁸⁴ For illustrative examples of letters sent to interned men see P88, James Ryan Collection, UCDA and Bernard O'Rourke Collection, P117, UCDA.

⁵⁸⁵ Letter to James Ryan by unknown correspondent dated 22 October 1916, P88/42 (1), James Ryan Collection. Evidence suggests that attempts were also made to send other ephemera to interned rebels such as a poem by Maeve Cavanagh and a 'reminiscence' of William Pearse. See Letter to Peadeare Galligan from Richard McKee dated 13 May 1917, CD 105/4/3, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

necessity dictated that they chose only one figure. These selections suggest a particular affinity with a specific rebel. Or, alternatively, that the biography of the rebel in question communicated a distinct attitude towards the Rising and advanced nationalism. Consequently, it is interesting to contemplate what the image of Thomas Clarke itself communicated that may have also been a way of dumbfounding the censors at Lewes Prison. Thomas Clarke was one of the few rebels who was known prior to the Rising. His status as a Fenian who had spent considerable time in prison prior to the Rising meant that he was symbolic of an older tradition of Irish Nationalism. Conversely, his image would have reminded the interned men that their current circumstances also fit within a broader legacy of imprisonment of Irish political prisoners. Clarke was the Easter Rising's living link with an older past of insurrection against British rule. One would imagine therefore, that this, coupled with his status as the principle signatory to the proclamation, would have made his image an obvious and popular choice to send an interned rebel. However, the reality is not as simplistic. In fact, one of the most baffling elements of the Rising's posthumous narrative is Clarke's complete absence. This is made even more confounding given Kathleen Clarke's pronounced status in the Irish National Aid and Volunteers Dependents Fund. Whilst her matriarchal role within the community of bereaved women in the aftermath of the Rising was a prominent one, Clarke's late husband is almost entirely absent from the memorial literature and narratives of the event. Individual biographies are given for Patrick Pearse and James Connolly in almost every souvenir publication produced and their actions over the course of Easter Week were extensively recorded.

Thomas Clarke however, is barely mentioned and this continues to be the case even in the Bureau of Military History Witness Statements and rebel memoirs that emerged at a later date. What the use of the Powell Press postcards in this context serves to illustrate is the ways in which ephemera was utilised to communicate to interned rebels in ways that text could not have achieved. Thus creating a complex interaction in which the sender challenges British authority in order to educate the rebels about the shifting narratives of the Rising in their absence.

In sum, mass produced ephemera were created with the intention of presenting a self-contained narrative of the Rising. In the particular example used, the Powell Press postcards, that narrative is focused upon the Rising as an act of blood sacrifice. It has been demonstrated that mass produced ephemera were manufactured by groups and companies with a range of different reasons for doing so ranging from profit to political conviction. What is more, it has been shown that these goods circulated under the watchful eye of the authorities whose anxieties around the production and distribution of potentially seditious material belied an awareness of the significant role ephemera played in mediating public opinion toward the Rising. However, perhaps more significant is the argument that the consumption of mass produced ephemera was an active process whereby owners modified, preserved, and used the items such as the Powell Press postcards, to mediate their own responses to the Rising and communicate them with others.

Relics

The Rebels

The mass-produced postcards and souvenir publications provided narrative information about the Rising. These objects also created, and distributed, interpretive myths of the event, for example, an interpretation of the Rising as a conscious blood sacrifice. Individual owners also used these objects to create a more nuanced and personalised relationship to the events of Easter Week, and the subsequent executions. However, items that had directly passed through the hands of interned rebels, or even more exclusively, executed leaders, had a greater value and a deeper significance. This more rarefied type of ephemera may, in fact, be better described as relics. Creating a personal connection to the rebels was a way of expressing the authenticity of a person's nationalist and republican identity to the community around them. A letter, sent by Frances Kelly to James Ryan, an interned rebel, in June 1916 serves to introduce and illustrate this point and it is worth quoting the letter in full.

My dear Mr Ryan (no 'my dear Jim' that is nicer n'estcepas?) Well I dare say a letter from me will surprise you not having exchanged more than twenty words in the course of our acquaintanceship, however that doesn't matter does it? In any case I must be in the fashion now and write to one of the Patriots. To say we enjoy the various letters that are handed round from time to time from the Detention Camps would only mildly express it. One person is reading the first page vive voce while a second is declaiming the second or third all at the same time. I gleaned from the whole, various and interesting scraps of information: to wit that you are all going through a course of charing, I hope you don't develop 'housemaids knee'. How are the other U.C.D's please remember me to them. Mr Dore and Mr Les Ryan and any others it doesn't matter whether I know them or not.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁶ Letter from Frances Kelly to James Ryan dated 11 June 1916, P88/21, James Ryan Collection, UCDA.

The rarefied and unique nature of the sources under discussion in this chapter means that it is challenging to find specific evidence of how individuals used and interacted with them. Kelly's letter therefore suggests several interesting insights. Firstly, it indicates how quickly attitudes towards the interned men began to alter. Already, by June 1916, just two months after the Rising, it had become the 'fashion' to write to 'patriots'.⁵⁸⁷ Secondly, the express purpose of Kelly's letter is to prompt a reply. He freely admits that he barely knows James Ryan, and is even less familiar with the men whom he asks Ryan to 'remember [him] to'.⁵⁸⁸ Kelly describes letters from the camps as a source of entertainment that was shared within a group and further indicates that the initial recipient was afforded a certain social status as a result of their contact with one of the absent 'patriots'. His request that Ryan would mention him to other internees from University College Dublin, whether or not he already knew them implies that Kelly wished to be associated with them on their return. Put simply, Kelly's letter is less about constructing a meaningful dialogue with the internees and more about participating in a developing culture in Dublin whereby individuals could claim a more authoritative and authentic experience of the Rising based upon their proximity to, and correspondence with, interned men. Nor, it should be noted, was Kelly unique. In another letter received by Ryan on the 8 June, 1916 he is thanked for a letter and informed that the recipient had been 'besieged' for it ever since. Once again this correspondent highlights that letters from the detention camps were passed

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

between people, each of whom sought to achieve a closer proximity to a rebel. This is further supported when the author states that 'you need not thank me at all for having sent Nan to visit you, because, as he said himself, he thought it an honour to have an interview with Irish Patriots'.⁵⁸⁹ Letters received by Ryan from his female associates suggest a particular difficulty experienced by men who remained in Dublin after the Rising whereby they were perceived to have failed to attain a requisite standard of masculinity. It was caused by the fact that by 1917 a substantial number of men were absent from Ireland either fighting in the ranks of the British Army, or interned for their nationalist sympathies. A female correspondent of Ryan's, Phyllis, wrote to tell him that 'the men of course are Nil'.⁵⁹⁰ Of course, this is an overstatement. What it implies however is that the men who did remain in Dublin had, by not having fought or been interned, failed to attain the sufficient hallmarks of masculinity to be worthy of female attention.⁵⁹¹ This perhaps also goes some way to explaining Francis Kelly's keenness that he should be welcomed into the social circle of men from UCD who were interned upon their return to Ireland.

The letters that returned to Ireland from the detention camps were items that afforded the owner a greater proximity to the rebels and thus, were highly treasured. However, a number of letters survive that suggest more often what people sought were objects that had been present during

⁵⁸⁹ Letter from M. Callacau to James Ryan dated 8 June 1916, P88/19(1), James Ryan Collection, UCDA.

⁵⁹⁰ Letter from Phyllis [surname unknown] to James Ryan, P88/6(2), James Ryan Collection, UCDA. The letter is undated but contextual information suggests that it was written sometime during June 1916.

⁵⁹¹ Ilana R. Bet-El, 'Men and Soldiers: British Conscripts, Concepts of Masculinity, and the Great War', in Billie Melman (ed.), *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870-1930* (London, 1998), pp. 73-95.

the Rising, or owned by one of the deceased leaders. Madee Calnan, a student, wrote to Ryan in June 1916 thanking him for procuring her some 'Sinn Féin buttons', which she had yet to receive. She informed him that 'when I get rich I am going to get one of them dipped in gold and made into a brooch for myself'.⁵⁹² By doing so, Calnan intended, not only to display her possession of a rarefied item but also to coat it in precious metal so it might be more decorative and noticeable. Much like the scrapbooks in the previous section, by modifying the buttons she transformed the object into one that articulated a more arbitrated and emotive relationship to the Rising.⁵⁹³ This particular instance, where James Ryan had been asked to procure items that were directly associated to the rebels and the fighting of Easter Week, seems, from the existing evidence, to have been unusual. More often, it appears to have been women who were approached with such requests. In the aftermath of the Rising, bereaved women acted as custodians and gatekeepers of what was held to be a rarefied and authentic experience of republican nationalism by virtue of their proximity to the Rising's leadership. Perhaps the individual who most encapsulated this phenomenon was Margaret Pearse, the mother of Patrick and William. In July 1916 she received a letter from her friend M.M. Keegan in which she states 'I am proud and grateful for the precious souvenirs of your dear son which you sent me. I wonder would you honour me still more by letting me have a

⁵⁹² Letter from Madee Calnan to James Ryan dated 17 June 1916, P88/20 (2), James Ryan Collection, UCDA.

⁵⁹³ Una Whelan also notes her procurement of 'a button, that was cut from, the tunic Poor Plunkett was executed in, and I assure you I cherish it dearly'. She notes this acquisition on the back of a postcard celebrating the return of Countess Markievicz in 1917. See P25/8, Peter Paul Galligan Collection, UCDA.

mortuary card of his + his brother for my prayer book'.⁵⁹⁴ Keegan also states in this letter that 'Father Augustine (God Bless him) gave me a beads blessed by himself + touched to the crucifix Eamon Ceant [sic] held in his dear hands when dying for Ireland'.⁵⁹⁵ The detail about the use of these objects is the clearest evidence we have that objects associated with the executed leaders were explicitly used as relics and devotional aids. The clear implication of her letter is, not only did the objects bring her closer to the rebels, but, because of their sanctified position, brought her closer to God Himself. In the particular instance of the beads that had been touched to Eamon Ceannt's crucifix there is the implication that his own piety imbued them with an even greater power.⁵⁹⁶ The letter also gives an indication of the elevated position of Margaret Pearse in the aftermath of the Rising when her friend wrote of the 'privilege' of speaking with her.⁵⁹⁷ Mrs Pearse was however, also approached by strangers who sought unique ephemera. Kathleen Mary Sheridan wrote to her on the 26 April, 1917. The letter does not address the fact that it was the anniversary of the Rising, nor is there any indication that the individuals had met previously. Instead, her brief correspondence says 'I collect signatures of famous Irishmen + dare to write to you asking for one of each of your dear martyred sons, if it is possible, if it is not perhaps you will let me have some thing ever so little which may have been theirs in

⁵⁹⁴ Letter to Margaret Pearse, Snr. from M. M. Keegan dated 29 July 1916, 8265/24, Pearse Papers, TCDA.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁶ Whilst Jonathan Githens-Mazer does not directly address the phenomenon described here he does clearly explain the increasing 'mix of religious and cultural imagery, of martyrdom and self-sacrifice, discipline and moral rectitude'. See Githens-Mazer, *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising*, p. 143.

⁵⁹⁷ Letter to Margaret Pearse, Snr. from M. M. Keegan dated 29 July 1916, 8265/24, Pearse Papers.

life'.⁵⁹⁸ Unlike M.M. Keegan, for whom relics of the executed leaders were of deep emotional significance, Sheridan's letter highlights that for others possession of such items was more related to their scarce and rarefied status. This was a phenomenon that was acknowledged and put to use when an auction was held to raise funds for the Irish National Aid and Volunteers Dependants Fund, 20 and 21 April, 1917.⁵⁹⁹ The lists that appears in the catalogue is a testament to the appetite for relics and ephemera relating to the Rising, and, in particular, its leaders.⁶⁰⁰ In this auction the lots, which were donated almost exclusively by women, included mundane items such as glass vases and examples of Irish linen being sold alongside items relating to the Volunteers. Interestingly, items directly connected to leaders of previous revolutionary challenges to British sovereignty in Ireland, such as Robert Emmet's wallet, the sword said to have stabbed Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and a piece of his outer coffin, were sold alongside items that had belonged to the leaders of the Rising.⁶⁰¹ The effect of this was to reassert the ascension of recently executed men into the pantheon of republican martyrs. Copies of the O'Donovan Rossa funeral booklet were also put up for auction showing how, already, the programme had acquired a greater significance and value on account of the funeral's connection to the Rising's

⁵⁹⁸ Letter to Margaret Pearse, snr. from K. M. Sheridan dated 26 April 1917, 8265/40, Pearse Papers, TCDA.

⁵⁹⁹ Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association', pp. 705-729.

⁶⁰⁰ Catalogue of Sale in Mansion House for Prisoners Dependants Fund 1917, 18BK/1K55/09, KGM. N.B. While the archive have listed the sale as being for the benefit of the Prisoners Dependent fund the catalogue itself clearly shows it is held for the benefit of the Irish National Aid and Volunteers Dependent Fund.

⁶⁰¹ The sword said to have stabbed Lord Edward Fitzgerald was, up until his death, owned by Patrick Pearse.

leaders, in particular to Patrick Pearse and Thomas Clarke.⁶⁰² Some of the more remarkable items belonging to the leaders to be sold included, a pocket flask of Eamon deValera, an engraved fountain pen belonging to Eamonn Ceannt and a pair of James Connolly's gloves.⁶⁰³ These items in particular epitomise the types of relic people sought. They had no discernable connection to the Rising or, indeed, any form of militarism. However, they had been intimately associated with the rebel in question, whether that association was to be worn against the skin, held to the mouth, or wielded by the hand to express thoughts and emotions. Consequently, to own the item was to share in its intimate and physical connection to the Rising's leaders. Also up for auction were original manuscripts of various writings by those executed for their parts in the Rising or, alternatively, books on an Irish theme, which they had autographed or in other ways marked, such as Joseph Plunkett's copy of W.B. Yeats' *Poems*. By placing lots that had once been owned or directly connected with the leaders of the Rising alongside lots that related to the earlier rebellions of the Fenians and the United Irishmen those in charge of the auction, who were predominantly female relatives of the deceased, were placing the Rising itself within a longer teleology of armed insurrection and martyrdom. However, this was only possible because of the existing demand for objects and ephemera that had a more personal connection to the rebels, and, in particular their leaders, than the mass-produced ephemera.

⁶⁰² Nora Ashe notes in her witness statement that she owned a copy of the O'Donovan Rossa commemoration booklet given to her by Thomas Clarke which she 'value[d] very much... It has an inscription written by himself [Clarke] "To Miss Nora Ashe in appreciation of patriotic services done'. See Miss Nora Ashe, WS/645, p. 6.

⁶⁰³ Catalogue of Sale in Mansion House for Prisoners Dependents Fund 1917, 18BK/1K55/09.

Succinctly put, items that had a direct link to the rebels and their leaders were in demand and sought out by individuals after the Rising. The reason for this was twofold. In the first instance they offered a more personalised and emotional link to the individual in question than a mass-produced and more readily available item did. Secondly, the unique nature of these items allowed the individual who owned them to claim an authentic proximity to the Rising and an associational relationship with its leadership even if, in reality, the individual in question had played little or no role in the advanced nationalist community prior to internment. In some instances, these goods were available through the open market as in the case of the INAAVDF auction. However, at other times relic hunters directly approached the custodians of these ephemeral treasures who were, more often than not, the female relatives. They sought a proximate relationship to the rebels through material objects. This chapter now turns its attentions to the ways in which individuals sought relics without making these direct appeals. Moreover, a discussion will now follow that considers the ways in which people used ephemera to narrate and mourn not only the rebels, but also the city itself.

The City

As this thesis has already highlighted, aside from images of the Rising's most prominent figureheads, images of Dublin City Centre during, and immediately after, the fighting were the most substantial subject of the commercially produced ephemera. Picture postcards and souvenir

publications focused predominantly on the destruction of Sackville Street, and the immediate vicinity, that had been devastated by the shelling and fires of Easter Week. However, just as was the case with the images, biographies and narratives of the rebels, individuals supplemented and modified these images of the city.⁶⁰⁴ Moreover, civilians were swift in their efforts to acquire souvenirs and mementos of the fighting from the rubble. The argument developed below is that the emotional significance of the city's destruction should not be underestimated. Indeed, items taken from the smouldering rubble were relics of the city itself, and the ephemera that bore images of the fires and destruction were just as important in mediating an emotional narrative and response to the Rising as ephemera relating to the leaders was.

The effect the physical devastation of Dublin's City Centre had on its inhabitants is hard to exaggerate. Souvenir publications consistently emphasised the destruction drawing parallels with the devastation of towns along the western front placing captions such as 'Ypres on the Liffey' underneath photographs of O'Connell's statue looking towards Dame Street.⁶⁰⁵ One such publication referred to 'the holocaust of Dublin's greatest thoroughfare'.⁶⁰⁶ These statements appear to reflect, rather than dictate, the reactions of Dubliners who witnessed the event. Alfred Fannin noted that, during the Rising, he heard news of the fall of Kut and yet 'cared little', as he

⁶⁰⁴ Postcards were routinely placed within scrapbooks. For illustrative examples see, Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637 and Scrapbook of Frank Martin, MS 33,695/1. Additionally, there is an example of a souvenir publication being fully annotated by its owner showing a highly reflexive engagement with the object and the narrative it relayed. See, *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War, Irish Rebellion of April 1916* (1), 17PR/1H22/05, KGM and *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War, Irish Rebellion of April 1916* (2), 17PR/1H22/06, KGM.

⁶⁰⁵ Dublin and the Sinn Féin Rising, 17BK/1J41/15, KGM.

⁶⁰⁶ *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook, Easter, 1916* (Dublin, 1917).

put it 'the nearer bulked the bigger so far as we in Dublin were concerned'.⁶⁰⁷ The souvenir publications that were produced assured the reader that the photographs within 'will convey more eloquently than word the damage that Dublin suffered during the Black Week [during which] the heart of the City burned itself out'.⁶⁰⁸ Robert Tweedy however, appears to have had the souvenir publications in mind when he wrote 'I saw the fire and it will never fade from my memory. No photographs can reproduce the awful devastation which it wrought, nor any writing the misery which it leaves behind'.⁶⁰⁹ The reproduction of so many identical images of urban destruction does suggest that the souvenir publications relied on the reprinting of existing images rather than taking their own. Meanwhile, it is clear that civilians also went forth into the streets immediately after the Rising in order to capture the scene, as a photo album by Thomas Johnson Westropp illustrates.⁶¹⁰ In creating his album Westropp overwhelmingly chose the same, or similar, vantage points as those shown in the more widely circulated photographs. One picture in the album however, is particularly interesting. Westropp choose to take a photograph of the portico of the General Post Office thus proving that, as early as May 1916, when he took the photos, the portico was becoming a central image in the mythology of the Rising.

Many individuals sought authentic or unique souvenirs of the Rising.

As Alfred Fannin noted people went 'as soon as the street was clear',

⁶⁰⁷ Warwick-Heller (eds.), *Letters from Dublin*, p. 43.

⁶⁰⁸ 'The Rebellion in Dublin, April 1916' a Commemorative Booklet produced by Eason & Sons, MS 10074, TCDA.

⁶⁰⁹ 'Letter from Robert Tweedy to his mother Sophia, dated 7 May 1916', MS 7533/3, TCDA.

⁶¹⁰ 'A Series of Views of The Ruins of Dublin After the Sinn Fein Rebellion taken by Thomas Johnson Westropp, May 1916' MS 5870, TCDA.

following the surrender of Pearse and Connolly, to collect 'trophies from the pockets of the Volunteers'.⁶¹¹ Some individuals didn't even wait that long. Oscar Traynor recalled an instance during the shelling of the Metropole Hotel where he witnessed an 'old fellow crawling about on his knees' collecting the molten lead of the shells.⁶¹² Traynor enquired as to what the man was doing 'he said "souvenirs". That is all he said'.⁶¹³ Despite the fact that, as this anecdote demonstrates, collecting 'souvenirs' could be immensely dangerous, there was an immediate understanding of scarcity and value attributed to authentic ephemera. Henry Hanna's neighbour had a copy of the police proclamation regarding the surrender of Pearse. The neighbour 'had the exact words of it' and Hanna 'took them down at the time thinking I might not possibly get a copy afterwards'.⁶¹⁴ Similarly, Elsie Mahaffy wrote of her frustration at having gone to numerous newsagents in an attempt to procure a copy of the 'Proclamation or the Irish War News which [she] was anxious to buy and which, no doubt, they all had plenty' only to be told that the none of the men she asked had ever heard of it.⁶¹⁵ Whilst Mahaffy's experience was almost undoubtedly due to her sex and class it serves to illustrate the ways in which people moved around the city seeking out relics of the Rising. Furthermore, her account proves that it was not just individuals with republican sympathies who sought out copies of seditious material. Mahaffy took time to describe the scenes following the

⁶¹¹ Warwick-Heller (eds.), *Letters from Dublin*, p. 40.

⁶¹² Hegarty and O'Toole, *The Irish Times*, p. 81.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ 'The Sinn Fein Rising as seen from a suburb of Dublin, a personal narrative by Henry Hanna, MS 10066/192, Dennis Johnson Collection.

⁶¹⁵ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

Rising during which time houses were, 'searched and violated, not only by the soldiers but by an inquisitive public, who treated all houses once searched as interesting battle scenes and hastened to visit them + secure relics from there'.⁶¹⁶ Examples of these 'relics' included bullets that had entered the houses, or, as in the case of Dennis Johnson's house; 'rifles, bayonets, bandoliers, ammunition and uniforms'.⁶¹⁷ Similar items were taken from the rubble in the streets and what remained of the burned out buildings. These items were conspicuously related to the Rising and their rarity ensured that they would likely hold some monetary value at a future date. However, there appears to have been an immediate and emotive value placed on these objects as well. People also sought to remove pieces of the buildings themselves. For example, Robert Tweedy went out after the hostilities and removed 'a piece of white glass with gilt streaks running through it which came from a lamp (chandelier) melted by the fire which destroyed the G.P.O'.⁶¹⁸

The psychological effect of this damaged landscape on Dubliners also served to distance the Westminster administration from those in Ireland, even those from a strongly unionist and ascendancy background such as Elsie Mahaffy. Such were her society credentials that she met Mr Asquith when he visited Dublin shortly after the Rising. Her interaction with him left a lasting impression and is indicative of a chasm between the attitudes of the British administration on either side of the Irish Sea. Asquith mentioned

⁶¹⁶ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

⁶¹⁷ There is nothing to us apart from the story of our lives, diary [of Dennis Johnson] to 1917', Dennis Johnson Collection, MS 10066/179; John Clarke's Diary of a Catholic Shopkeeper, MS 10485; Warwick-Heller (eds.), *Letters from Dublin*, p. 49.

⁶¹⁸ Note by Robert Tweedy, jnr. about MS 7533/3, MS 7533/4, TCDA.

to Mahaffy, in what she described as a 'flippant' tone that he was 'surprised to see how little harm, bad as it is, the Rebellion has done to Dublin'.⁶¹⁹

Mahaffy's verbal and psychological response signified her sense of betrayal by the British administration.

The harm – to view, is not little, it is very great in proportion to the size of Dublin not an enormous town. But its fine Georgian heart is largely burnt out & will never be rebuilt in the fine style & sound workmanship to which the Georgian period bequeathed it to us. I said 'Oh Mr Asquith! Did you really expect to find us all sitting in the street with no roof on us? I withdrew but I felt there was some evil intended to us, either to please Redmond and keep the Irish vote or to save himself the trouble of really facing the horrible facts.'⁶²⁰

In some respects, Asquith's assessment of the damage was correct. Trinity College, Dublin Castle, the old House of Lords, and the stately suburban residences that hosted British dignitaries were largely unscathed. Therefore, the administrative and symbolic infrastructure of British rule had escaped the catastrophic levelling that had been described in newspaper reports around the world. However, Mahaffy writes as though she found Asquith's flippancy callous and ignorant. As a Dubliner, she mourned the loss of landmarks, of architectural beauty, and the familiarity of the City. She, like so many others in the weeks following the Rising, travelled around the city, noticing not only the destruction of large buildings such as the GPO. but also the loss of particular shops, residential slum properties, and street landmarks. There is an overwhelming sense of loss, shame and anger in civilian accounts, as though the city had been contaminated and sullied.

Dublin never looked so bedraggled+sordid though, I hear, it was never so rich: but the entire absence of the upper classes from the streets & the general decay everywhere visible – as well as the

⁶¹⁹ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

grime + towering ruins the Sinn Feiners made of our fine streets, do not lead one to feel that one is living in the metropolis of a noble newborn nation.⁶²¹

It appears that for many civilians the destruction of Sackville Street signified the death of Dublin city as one of the great European metropolises. In particular, the cessation of the tram service, which had been the first of its kind, features in numerous accounts.⁶²² Dennis Johnson ends his timeline of the Rising with the restoration of a limited tram service, and several accounts highlight the return of police to the streets as a reassuring indication that normal city life was being restored.⁶²³

The souvenir publications and postcards referred to earlier reflect the aforementioned trauma experienced by civilians as a result of the city's destruction.⁶²⁴ They also represent the most complete commercial attempts to narrate the Rising and, as such it is worthwhile considering a sample in slightly greater detail. The publications vary in length and, consequently, detail. However, in almost all cases the events of Easter Week, 1916 are narrated and supplemented with photographs of the leaders and the areas of the city where the fighting took place. The same images are used for the majority of the books, though occasionally the longer examples contain

⁶²¹ Ibid.

⁶²² Raines, *Commodity Culture*, p. 169.

⁶²³ There is nothing to us apart from the story of our lives, diary [of Dennis Johnson] to 1917', Dennis Johnson Collection, MS 10066/179; John Dillon to Lady Mathew 25 April-1 May, 1916; an account of the Rising, MS 9820.

⁶²⁴ For Souvenir publications see, *Rebellion Album 1916*, 17BK/1J21/12, KGM; *Sinn Féin Rebellion Album 1916*, 17BK/1J21/13, KGM; *The Sinn Fein Revolt Illustrated*, 17BK/1J21/14, KGM; *Dublin After Six Days Insurrection*, 17BK/1J41/13, KGM; *Dublin and the Sinn Féin Rising*, 17BK/1J41/15; *The Rebellion in Dublin April 1916*, 17PC/1A53/28, KGM; *Sinn Féin Revolt 1916 Twelve interesting Views*, 17PC/1B14/10, KGM; *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War*, Irish Rebellion of April 1916 (1), 17PR/1H22/05; *The Times History and Encyclopedia of the War*, Irish Rebellion of April 1916 (2), 17PR/1H22/06; *Irish Life Record of 1916 Rebellion*, 17PR/1K11/03, KGM. For examples of postcards depicting the cityscape following the Rising see, *Sinn Féin Revolt postcards*, 17PD/1A15/5-30, KGM.

additional images such as those depicting British troops and a greater number of photographs chronicling the changed aspect of the city.⁶²⁵ The level of detail and interpretation given to individual tales of the Rising and its aftermath, such as the marriage of Grace and Joseph Plunkett, or the burial of civilian bodies in North King Street, ranges from non-existent in the smaller publications to exhaustive in the *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*.⁶²⁶

Clair Wills points out that the images in these publications are comparable to the scenes of devastation in towns and cities along the Western Front, wrought by the First World War, that filled the press in Ireland at the time.⁶²⁷ Placing the Rising in the context of devastation and ruin elsewhere in Europe provided a frame of reference to begin to make sense of the rapid and wholesale destruction of key Dublin landmarks. One clear example of this is the front cover of *Dublin and the Sinn Fein Rising* [Fig 6] that shows the statue of Daniel O'Connell on Sackville Street surrounded by rubble and damaged buildings. It is entitled, quite simply, Ypres on the Liffey.

⁶²⁵ The Sinn Fein Revolt Illustrated, 17BK/1J21/14.

⁶²⁶ *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*. The handbook was produced by *The Weekly Irish Times* and sold for 1/6. It was the most fullsome narrative of its type and attempted to provide an authoratative representation of all aspects of the Rising.

⁶²⁷ Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p. 89.



[Fig 6] Souvenir Publication of the Easter Rising entitled *Dublin and the Sinn Féin Rising*, 17BK 1J41 15, Kilmainham Gaol Museum. Image reproduced by kind permission of Kilmainham Gaol Museum.

However whilst the damage to the city, casualties, and loss of life caused by the Rising brought the antagonisms of the European conflict closer to home, in doing so, it simultaneously created a more introspective attitude amongst the Irish populous where Dublin and the Irish concerns it symbolised became the focus of attention. Indeed, what these publications emphasise is the destruction of those buildings and areas of the city that had, in the period prior to the Rising epitomised Dublin's existence a cosmopolitan urban environment of the *fin de siècle*. The greatest example of this are the publications that contrasted images of Sackville Street, 'one of the four great streets of Europe', as it had been prior to the Rising with the ruins that were

left in its wake.⁶²⁸ The images of the main thoroughfare prior to the Rising depict trams in the foreground of the image, which were a readily identifiable symbol of Dublin's modernity.⁶²⁹ These images contrast sharply with the later images of toppled trams that had been utterly destroyed when they had been used as barricades during the fighting.⁶³⁰ The gutted inside of the GPO is also frequently depicted alongside either a written or pictorial illustration of how it had been when it was reopened with an artistic, modern interior, just six weeks before the Rising.⁶³¹ Spaces that provided entertainment and culture were also, as this thesis has already discussed at length, central to life in Dublin. So, it is unsurprising perhaps that the souvenir publications chose to depict the eviscerated interior of the Coliseum Theatre.⁶³² Interestingly, the photographer chose to show the view from the stage meaning that what is actually shown is the decimated auditorium. The image therefore illustrates in stark terms that a consequence of the Rising was to literally, in one arena at least, remove the space for spectatorship and audience membership that had formed such a central feature of city life. The Royal Hibernian Academy was also badly damaged by the shelling was a focus of the commentary in the booklets.⁶³³ One in particular noted that the works of art that comprised the Annual

⁶²⁸ Dublin and the Sinn Féin Rising, 17BK/1J41/15. All of the remaining souvenir publications consulted for this research showed at least one scene of Sackville Street.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.; The Sinn Fein Revolt Illustrated, 17BK/1J21/14 and Sinn Féin Revolt 1916 Twelve interesting Views, 17PC/1B14/10. See also, Raines, *Commodity Culture*, p. 169.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ The Sinn Fein Revolt Illustrated, 17BK/1J21/14.

⁶³² Dublin and the Sinn Féin Rising, 17BK/1J41/15.

⁶³³ Ibid.

Exhibition of Pictures was also 'included in the holocaust' that claimed 'Ireland's lost temple of Art'.⁶³⁴

What the images in these souvenir publications narrate therefore is not just the Rising and its aftermath, but the destruction of the familiar and knowable cityscape that had, throughout the period under discussion in this thesis, formed the basis of self-expression and civic participation. From the speed with which individuals took to the street to take in and assess the damage for themselves, and the fraught and emotive tones they used to record what they witnessed, it would appear that the publications reflected a broader experience of trauma. The important challenge for those living in Dublin immediately after the Rising was one of how to navigate and interact with the city in ways that made sense of the hostilities. It is to this question, that this thesis now turns its attention alongside a consideration of how the remaining community of advanced nationalists attempted to shape this new public consciousness.

Collective Display

This chapter has already explored some of the more private and personal ways in which individuals used and displayed the ephemera produced in the post-Rising period. It has been argued that these processes aided in interpreting and informing the myths and narratives of the Rising that were emerging. However, in order to elucidate still further the significance of ephemera in creating and communicating the myths and narratives of the

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

Rising it is crucial to consider their use and display in Dublin's public spaces. It is vital that the various postcards, poems, ballads, handbills, badges, publications and assorted ephemera, are seen as affecting, and reflecting, the public displays of republicanism that followed the Rising. And, in turn, that those displays are interpreted broadly to reveal how an increasingly sympathetic opinion towards republicanism was demonstrated.

On the 20 May, 1916 the Dublin Metropolitan Police issued a circular to the proprietors of Dublin's picture houses to inform them that 'exhibitions of pictures relating to Irish rebellions will not be permitted and that if such exhibitions are given the consequences may be serious'.⁶³⁵ This however, was not a decision made by Dublin Castle. The Assistant Secretary thought it wise to leave the matter to the military authorities, and the directive bore the name of Neville Chamberlain. It is clear that the British authorities understood that maintaining control of spaces catering for popular entertainment was of great importance following the Rising. The attention of the authorities appears to have been drawn however, not by cinematic newsreel displays in Ireland, but by a letter, that appeared in a London evening paper, that was sent to the Chief Secretary's office on the 9 May, 1916, three days *prior* to the final executions. The letter noted an American film called *The Heart of Kathleen: A Tale of Irish Rebellion*.⁶³⁶ The principle issue appeared to revolve around the poster advertising the film. It was already on display in London and was due to be exhibited in Ireland within a fortnight of the letter's date. The 'flaring' poster showed 'an

⁶³⁵ 5611/8466, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

Irishman on the gallows, and [the] red-coated soldiers of George III looking on at the end of the scene of execution'.⁶³⁷ The author asked 'what do the government think of this announcement while the ruins of Sackville Street are still smoking and the bodies of soldiers, civilians, and rebels await burial?'.⁶³⁸ Clearly, the cinemas, and the public nature of the advertisement, were considered to be arenas in which feelings might be inflamed against the authorities and, what is more, where such antagonisms might be displayed. One clear example of this was the outbreak of hissing at a theatre where newsreel footage of the King inspecting British troops was shown in July 1916.⁶³⁹ As the first chapter of this thesis discussed, symbols of British authority had been hissed on Irish stages prior to the Rising. However, unlike theatrical performances, film had the capacity to bring the viewer into direct proximity to the monarch himself, albeit figuratively.⁶⁴⁰ The gesture therefore took on an added air of sedition. The state considered preventing the display of film footage of King George V but considered it 'most injudicious' in that it would 'show weakness'.⁶⁴¹ An indication that favour was turning against British rule in Ireland troubled the authorities more, however, with what happened following the event in question. Two men were apprehended for having hissed at newsreel footage of the sitting British monarch. The Royal Magistrate was convinced of the guilt of the two men in question. Despite this, he wrote to the Irish Chief Secretary to explain that there was 'no hope of obtaining a conviction from... the magistrates

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ 5648/25969, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

who sit in this case'.⁶⁴² The implication here is that the loyalty of the local judiciary was wavering and that this was demonstrated by their lenient approach to punishing minor incidents of sedition. Similar scenes of hissing were witnessed in theatres around Dublin and in other instances where British troops appeared on screen. However, in one of the latter instances the D.M.P. report stated that these displays were muted by 'cheers and applause from the other portion of the house [which] completely drowned out the attempted hissing'.⁶⁴³

As noted previously in this thesis, the theatres had long been sites of interactive public political display. This appears to have continued alongside audiences interactions with cinematic presentation. Police noted that in the immediate period following the Rising the gallery of both the Empire and the Theatre Royal, traditionally the most vocal area of the auditorium, 'displayed disloyalty by booing and hissing as they thronged out of the theatres' and showed signs of hostility during 'God Save the King'.⁶⁴⁴ While attempts at apprehension and arrest were made 'the offense was extremely difficult of detection inasmuch as the lights were low and the offender thronged through the exits with their heads down'.⁶⁴⁵ An anonymous writer complained to the Chief Secretary that the Abbey Theatre was 'a hotbed of disloyalty'.⁶⁴⁶ The author reminded the Chief Secretary that the theatre had been roundly 'condemned at the Rebellion Commission' and

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ 5624/17375, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ 5631/20855, CSORP 1916, NAI.

asked ‘Can you not check it in some way – it’s disgraceful’.⁶⁴⁷ The situation even prompted a Prime Minister’s Question in the House of Commons with Major Newman reporting that on the 26 June, 1916 ‘a body of military officers were hissed and insulted by a crowd of Irish Republicans on emerging from the Theatre Royal, Dublin’.⁶⁴⁸ Newman asked the Prime Minister ‘whether he is further aware that non-commissioned officers and private soldiers have complained in writing of having recently been hooted, jeered at, [and] spat upon while walking in the streets’.⁶⁴⁹ The material prepared for the response painted the situation as somewhat more subdued stating that ‘officers and soldiers can land and traverse the streets without molestation. There have however been several isolated cases where the King’s Uniform has been hissed in the streets’.⁶⁵⁰ What can be ascertained from the police reports to the Irish Chief Secretary is that the streets and theatres were, as they had been throughout the period under discussion, vibrant places of exchange. The difference, however, was that whereas in the period prior to the Rising individuals were held to account for acts such as insulting military personnel, those persons were now identified as Irish Republicans.⁶⁵¹ Their actions had gone from those of personal protest to a movement on behalf of the collective body in an avowedly, and knowingly, political gesture. Alongside these fleeting acts of sedition more organised

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁸ 5617/11874, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Advanced nationalists were increasingly being identified by the authorities as republicans following the Rising. Additionally, a significant proportion of those from within the advanced nationalist community increasingly saw an independent republic as the only satisfactory outcome to the question of Irish sovereignty. Consequently, from this point on this thesis will use republican in addition to advanced nationalist to describe individuals and events where they self-identified, or were identified as such by contemporaries.

and explicit demonstrations of republican loyalty to the rebels were taking place. The participants in these events occupied space and used ephemera to communicate the growing support for republicanism. Importantly, what these events also show is the didactic relationship between the creation and appropriation of the narratives and symbols of the Rising. This last point will be explained in far greater detail below but put simply, ephemera circulated that cast women, for example, in the role of grieving mothers and widows.⁶⁵² The female relatives of the republican leaders, who organised many of the events discussed below, appropriated that interpretation of their role in order to render their demonstrations intelligible to, and garner support from, a wider audience. However, in so doing they reinforced and tacitly accepted the characterisation of the role of women as secondary to that of the men within Irish republicanism.

Memorial Masses, in remembrance of those who were executed for their part in the Rising, were held throughout 1916.⁶⁵³ They were events that utilised the public space of the Church to translate private grief into a demonstration of political support for the republican ideals of the rebels. General Maxwell wrote to Archbishop Walsh on 16 June, 1916, highlighting the political demonstrations taking place outside churches where requiem masses were held. His letter gives a flavour of these events and also highlights the difficulties faced by the British authorities in policing them. He wrote 'yesterday there was a procession of perhaps 2,000 people

⁶⁵² Particularly clear examples of this are shown throughout issues of the Catholic Bulletin, most notably in their special issue on the 'widows and orphans' of the Rising. See Catholic Bulletin: Widows and Orphans, 18PR/1K44/14, KGM

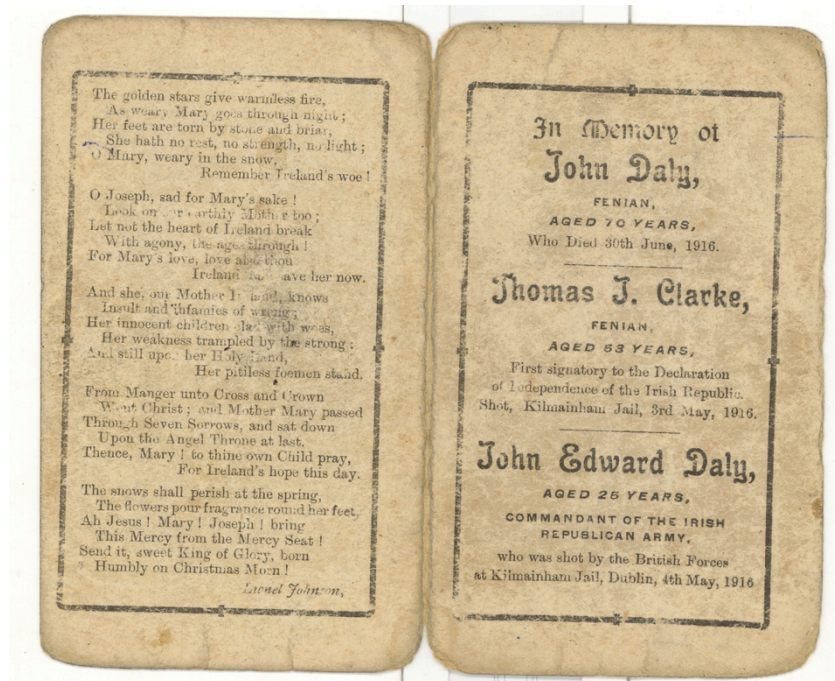
⁶⁵³ George Sweeney, 'Self-Immolation in Ireland: Hungerstrikes and Political Confrontation', *Anthropology Today*, 9:5 (1993), p. 13.

marching along the quays and streets waving Sinn Féin flags, booing at officers, and soldiers'.⁶⁵⁴ He went on to state 'I really do not know if your Lordship can interfere in the matter, but perhaps the Priests conducting the Masses might be asked to advise their congregations to disperse quietly after they have been said and take no part in such demonstrations'.⁶⁵⁵ What Maxwell's correspondence highlights is that the British authorities acknowledged that the sanctity of religious places of worship fell outside of their jurisdiction. Consequently, while the State was doing all it could to deny advanced nationalists a public platform the churches were being used by republicans to create a space in which to mobilise political opinion in favour of the rebels.⁶⁵⁶ One way to see how this was achieved is to consider the memorial cards that were produced for these events. The illustrative example shown in [Figs 7&8] was produced to commemorate the lives of John Daly, Thomas J. Clarke and John Edward Daly and is typical.

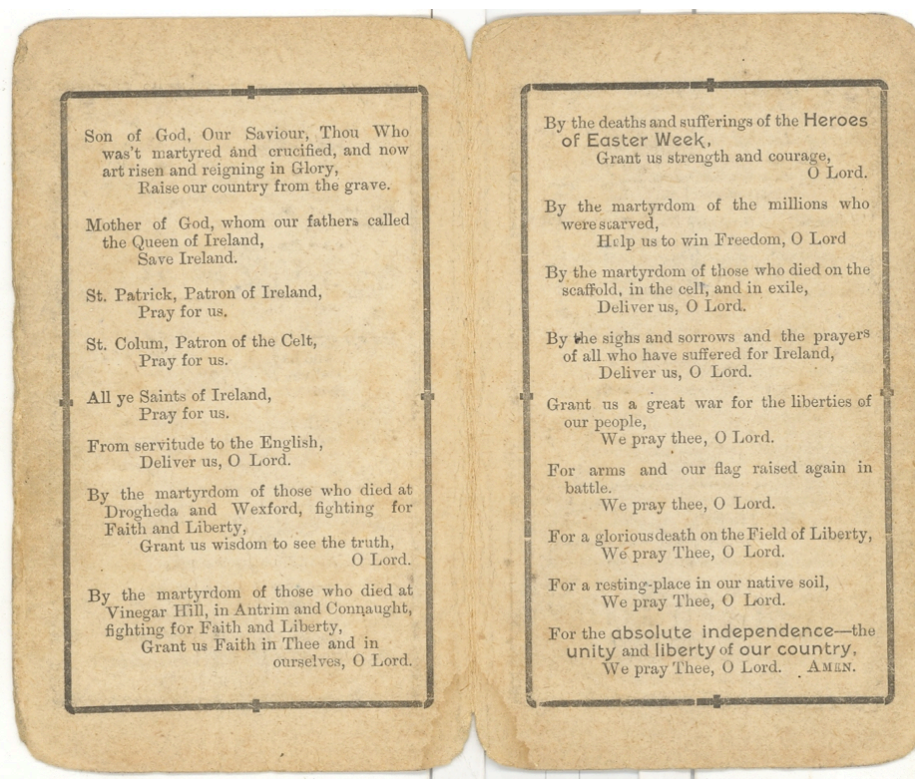
⁶⁵⁴ Letter from General J. G. Maxwell to Archbishop Walsh dated 16 June 1916, 385/5, Walsh Papers 1916, DDA. See also, 5613/10058, CSORP 1916, NAI.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ The importance of commemorations to mark out a space for the performance of Irish identity in opposition to the colonial state is discussed in McCaughey, *Memory and Redemption*, p. 38. The importance of iconography in those practises is addressed in Santino, 'Performing Ireland', pp. 15-16.



[Fig 7] Front and back cover of a memorial card dedicated to John Daly, Thomas J. Clarke, and John Edward Daly, 2011.0258a, Kilmainham Gaol Museum. Image reproduced by kind permission of Kilmainham Gaol Museum.



[Fig 8] Interior of a memorial card dedicated to the memory of John Daly, Thomas J. Clarke and John Edward Daly, 2011.0258b, Kilmainham Gaol Museum. Image reproduced by kind permission of Kilmainham Gaol Museum.

Memorial cards such as the one above were kept in prayer books as devotional aids.⁶⁵⁷ In the example above two of the men lost their life as a consequence of their actions in Easter week, two of them are described as Fenians and all three men were related.⁶⁵⁸ Additionally, John Daly had initially recruited Thomas Clarke into the Irish Republican Brotherhood and they had served time together in prison. Grouping these three men together on one memorial card therefore communicated several important themes that were prevalent in republican narratives of the Rising. Firstly, it emphasises Thomas Clarke's role as the link between the Fenian physical force tradition and the Rising. Secondly, the three generations of men memorialised on the card symbolise the importance of each generation staging an insurrection against British rule. Finally, the men's relationship to one another emphasises the sacrifice of one family in the name of Irish independence and on the emotional burden faced by those who survived the men. The inside of the memorial card bears a prayer that explicitly places the Rising within a longer teleology of Irish republicanism. It cites the Irish famine, the 1798 rebellion and Fenian martyrs and exiles and also expresses an earnest hope 'for our arms and our flag to be raised again in battle'. Moreover, the prayer also draws a parallel between the fates of those who lost their lives in the struggle for Irish independence and the martyrdom of Christ. This was in keeping with a culture that existed after the Rising where executed leaders were 'prayed for (and even prayed to) [and] Pearse's

⁶⁵⁷ For evidence of memorial cards being kept in prayer books see; letter to Margaret Pearse, Snr. from M. M. Keegan dated 29 July 1916, 8265/24, Pearse Papers and The Poems of John Francis MacEntee, 18BK/1B52/01.

⁶⁵⁸ John Edward 'Ned' Daly was the nephew of John Daly and the brother-in-law of Thomas Clarke.

poems and addresses, carefully marketed to secure maximum effect, [had become] a sacred book'.⁶⁵⁹ In drawing parallels with Christ's sacrifice, especially in a place of worship and in the form of a prayer, the memorial card expressly made the case for the sanctified position of Irish republicanism and rejected all other political alternatives. Not only this, it by extension implies that, if the pursuit of Irish independence through physical force is divinely ordained then, it follows that to pursue an alternative resolution to the question of Ireland's sovereignty was a rejection of God's will.

The ephemera that circulated in these memorial masses served to draw a spiritual connection between the executed leaders and the congregation. There was however, another way in which memorial masses offered the public proximity to the rebels, and that was through the presence of their, predominantly female, relatives.⁶⁶⁰ Republicans were able to use the proximity of the living relatives to emphasise not only the sacrifice of the men but also the ability of the female relatives to carry the emotional burden of that sacrifice. Civilians were afforded the opportunity to gain access to the bereaved families of the deceased in what was an intimate ritual within the public space of the church. This had the effect of facilitating a growing desire, as shown in the collection of relics, to be authentically associated with the intimate community of the rebels and their families.

⁶⁵⁹ Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, p. 487.

⁶⁶⁰ Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, p. 31.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of the Rising advanced nationalists, unionists, and commercially motivated parties, produced ephemera to support their attempts to shape and control the narratives, myths and symbols of the event. They were responding to a popular demand for information and souvenirs of the Rising. As chapter two of this thesis has already discussed at length, the Rising was broadly unintelligible to its audience at the time; however, this chapter has argued that ephemera helped to shape matters. What is more, the owners of the ephemera displayed it, and modified it, in ways that mediated a more personal reaction to the Rising to the wider community around them. These more individual reflections, in turn, helped to shape public interpretations of the Rising.

There were two crucial features of the post-Rising environment in which the ephemera circulated. The first was the absence of vast numbers of the advanced nationalist community from Ireland. The second was the traumatic impact of the destruction caused by the Rising to Dublin's central streets and buildings. Consequently, while people did procure the mass-produced ephemera that were aimed at educating the populace of the central events and themes of the Rising, they also sought out more unique relics, both of the city and the rebels. These relics were rarefied and held a deeper emotional significance to those who owned them. They offered, and displayed, a closer proximity to the Rising and consequently endowed the owner with a claim of authentic association with the rebels. The destruction caused by the Rising changed the aspect of the city whilst the constraints of martial law changed the ways individuals moved around it. However, just as

Dubliners had articulated their politics through the urban environment prior to the Rising, so to did they in its aftermath. Republicans, and especially women, were quick to capitalise on this use of space using the churches, for example, to channel changing popular sentiment towards the rebels into displays of republican sympathies. The role of women was of particular importance during this period. On the one hand they were cast into prescriptive and binary gender roles that did little to reflect the active militancy of the Rising's female combatants. Conversely, women were left to facilitate and guide the change in public attitudes to the Rising during the absence of the men.⁶⁶¹ This was particularly true of some of the female relatives of the Rising's leaders such as Kathleen Clarke and Margaret Pearse. By the time the internees returned to Ireland in June 1917 under the general amnesty, attitudes to the Rising had changed immeasurably. It is to the ways in which republicans harnessed ephemera, and the use of the city as a platform to display their ascendancy, that this thesis will now consider.

⁶⁶¹ Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman* (4th edn; Helen Litton (ed.): Dublin, 2008), pp. 181-190.

4

Martyrdom and the New Republicans; The Case of Thomas Ashe

The remaining prisoners were released under a general amnesty, agreed by David Lloyd George on 15 June, 1917, and arrived in Dublin on 18 June, 1917.⁶⁶² The government purposefully ensured the prisoners arrived early in the morning with a minimum of advance warning so as to avoid large homecoming scenes and a propaganda coup for Sinn Féin. They were unsuccessful. Word had spread that the prisoners would be arriving back in Ireland, and crowds waited for hours, sometimes throughout the night, to greet them at Westland Row train station.⁶⁶³ Newspaper reports emphasised the way the crowds waved flags and banners, and sang songs that had become associated with the Rising such as, *The Soldier's Song*, *Felons of Our Land*, and, *Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week?*⁶⁶⁴ Reports of the homecoming in the newspapers included photographs of the returned rebels which labelled them for ease of identification. Interestingly, reports noted that the returned internees'

relations would hardly recognise some of the men at first sight. Eoin MacNeill, for instance, stripped of his beard and with a closely cropped head was quite unrecognisable. Thomas Ashe minus his curly locks and moustache, did not look quite himself, though he appeared as strong as ever.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶² Some internees had been released prior to the general amnesty.

⁶⁶³ Selection of press clippings from *Irish Independent* June 1917, CD 323/1/3 (4), Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

This particular statement came from a clipping of the *Irish Independent*. Its ability to convey the changed appearance of the men relies on the reader being familiar with how the individuals looked prior to their participation in the Rising and departure from Ireland. The Powell Press postcards, that bore identical images to those that circulated on other ephemera during the period of internment, clearly depicted Ashe's 'curly locks and moustache' and they also showed MacNeill's visage with a beard. Whilst no doubt the internees' immediate family may well have been startled by their loved ones' appearances, the newspaper was, in fact, relaying the fact that the broader populace may be surprised by how different the rebels looked. As many accounts of the Rising highlight precisely how unknown the rebels were at the time, it is a testament to the effectiveness of the ephemera in circulation that, one year on, the assumption of visual recognition was commonplace. Reports on the homecomings also commented upon the reactions of the prisoners' female relatives noting how; 'Mothers, wives, and sisters searched for their fond ones among the throng and tearfully embraced them. Many wept copiously as they witnessed the havoc which the prison life had wrought in the countenance and physique of a father, husband, or son'.⁶⁶⁶ Such accounts reinforced what had, by June 1917, become a commonplace description of the role of women within the advanced nationalist community. It describes them as individuals whose role it was to bear witness to the brutalities of the colonial state, and to find the emotional language through which to articulate it. These reports, along

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

with multitudes of others, and widely circulated images of densely populated and jubilant crowds, typically present the return of the men as a moment of celebration where the Irish populous welcomed home the men who had now become recognised as the heroes of Easter Week.⁶⁶⁷ However, for the returning men, the situation appears to have been somewhat more complicated. Eamon deValera was unique in understanding the importance of orchestrating the presentation of the men on arrival at Westland Row train station. As they stepped off the train the men heard the waiting crowds singing and immediately joined in with *A Soldier's Song*. De Valera, 'whom all the prisoners appeared to regard with pride as their chief' took control and 'immediately marshalled [the men] into military order'.⁶⁶⁸ He understood entirely the importance of presenting the returned men as an army who, far from being pacified by their experiences of internment, had returned with a new chain of command and a greater understanding of organisation and discipline. For others, however, the change in public opinion between the Rising and the prisoner's return was too overwhelming. A welcome breakfast, for example, was held in the men's honour where 'it was quite an ordeal to pass through the crowd, several men, anxious to get to their homes, and in order to avoid delay occasioned by popular enthusiasm outside, got away... by a back entrance'.⁶⁶⁹ As this thesis began to argue in the previous chapter, there appeared to have been some conflict between

⁶⁶⁷ For examples of the postcards and images that circulated see, Countess Markievicz Arrives At Liberty Hall, 18PC/1A25/13, KGM; Countess Markievicz Returns from Prison to Huge Crowds, 18PC/1A25/14, KGM; Return of Countess Markievicz; Other Irish Prisoners 1917, 18PC/1A22/14, KGM and Four Photos of Returned Prisoners from Frongoch, 18PC/1A25/19, KGM and A4 Poster of the Enniscorthy Prisoners, CD 105/4/7, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

⁶⁶⁸ Selection of press clippings from *Irish Independent* June 1917, CD 323/1/3 (4), Contemporary Documents Collection.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

the internees' perception of their role in preserving the legacy of the Rising, and the construction of interpretive myths and narratives in their absence. A particularly telling section of a newspaper report indicates the resentment felt by some of the prisoners about perceived inaccuracies in the narratives of the Rising and the fact that the realities of their experiences appeared to have been ignored.

At the old G.P.O. again. The rank and file of the army, [the rebels] say, acted in some cases far more honourably than their officers, who didn't seem to quite understand the class of men they were dealing with. As to their treatment in prison the released men resent the publishing of stories which do not come through them. The ex-prisoners have not yet had an opportunity to consider their future line of action in regard to politics, being busy paying visits and receiving congratulations.⁶⁷⁰

The extract above highlights a crucial feature in the experiences of prisoners returning to Ireland, the sense of bewilderment at the world they had returned to and the drive to reclaim control over the advanced nationalist movement. Cathal Brugha summed up the attitude of many of those returning from internment. He recognised that it was women who 'organised their public Masses and their public meetings as far as they could, who kept the spirit alive, who kept the flame alive and the flag flying'.⁶⁷¹ The clear implication was that the role of these women was important and worthy of recognition, however, it was now time for the women to relinquish power to the men. The ex-prisoners returned to Ireland with their own leaders and chains of command that had been established in the prisons and camps. They quickly set about challenging the Irish Parliamentary Party for power with considerable success, under the banner

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Cathal Brugha quoted in Brian Farrell, 'Markievicz and the Women of the Revolution' in F. X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916* (London, 1967), p. 235.

of Sinn Féin, in by-elections. These successful efforts at wielding the power of the popular vote were coupled with a renewed militarism aided by the restructuring of the Volunteers and a swell in membership caused by new recruits following the return of the interned men.⁶⁷² A significant amount has been written about the growth of Sinn Féin, the collapse of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and the restructuring and resurrection of the Volunteers prior to the onset of the War of Independence.⁶⁷³ These debates will not be rehashed here. Rather, it is the intention of this chapter to consider, through an investigation into the death and funeral of Thomas Ashe, the ways in which ‘the new republicans’ used public space and ephemera to articulate their renewed control of a militarised republican movement.⁶⁷⁴

Thomas Ashe died, in the Mater hospital, from complications caused by forced feeding, on the 25 September, 1917.⁶⁷⁵ He had been on hunger strike for five days. His death was a ‘volcanic moment’ and it, along with the subsequent public funeral in Dublin, provides a vital insight into the strategies deployed by Republicans to protest the authority of the British state and mobilise public opinion.⁶⁷⁶ Despite this, scholarship that considers

⁶⁷² Frank Henderson, WS/821, NAI, p. 35.

⁶⁷³ Laffan, *The Resurrection of Ireland*.

⁶⁷⁴ The *Sunday Herald*, 28 October 1917 ran a headline that read “Those who won’t fight are not wanted” Countess Markievicz’s message to Sinn Feiners’ below this, under the subheading “The New Republicans’ were images of Countess Markievicz, Eamon deValera, and Darrell Figgis.

⁶⁷⁵ At the time of his death Thomas Ashe was the leader of the IRB. He had been the commandant of the Volunteers at the battle of Ashbourne, one of the few military victories for the rebels during Easter Week. His initial death sentence for his part in the Rising was commuted and he had been interned in Lewes prison where he had been accepted as one of the leaders of the prisoners. Between the period of his return to Ireland and his death three months later he had been politically active giving speeches across the country. One of which resulted in a charge of sedition for which he was imprisoned in Mountjoy Jail where he would ultimately die as a result of forced feeding.

⁶⁷⁶ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 333.

republican deaths, particularly through self-immolation, in the post-Rising period routinely underestimates the significance of Thomas Ashe's protest and subsequent death. The majority of works sparing only a few lines of text before providing detailed analysis of either the political revolution of Sinn Féin, or the death of Terence MacSwiney. This chapter argues that Ashe's death was a watershed moment in which martyrology, the body of the rebel, ephemera, and the use of the Dublin landscape combined to present a unified narrative of republicanism. Furthermore, the fact the organisers of Ashe's funeral were successful in presenting this narrative demonstrates the extent to which attitudes towards republicans had changed since the Rising. This chapter will discuss Ashe's protest, and his funeral, to explore how the Rising was reconciled with a longer, and more intelligible narrative of Dublin's socio-political landscape. The discussion that follows also seeks to address the lacuna of scholarship about the significance of Ashe's death in the context of a tradition of republican hunger strikes. In doing so, it recognises the challenges that the nature of Ashe's protest and death raised for the organisers of his funeral.

Thomas Ashe, the First Republican Hunger Striker.

From our contemporary perspective, hunger strikes are recognised as one of the iconic forms of protest deployed by republicans during the fight for Irish independence. The most prominent of all were the H-block hunger strikes of 1981, led by Bobby Sands, in which ten men eventually died. These strikes were a propaganda coup for the republicans of Northern Ireland and were

portrayed as a herculean battle of wills that broke out between the prisoners and an unyielding British government, headed by the iron will of Margaret Thatcher. In the years that have followed those strikes there have been a number of monographs, some more partisan than others, and memoirs published that seek to explain the chronology and rationale of the protest.⁶⁷⁷ In academic terms, much of the work that theorises and conceptualises the hunger strike, as a particular form of protest, couches itself in examples from the 1981 hunger strikes in Long Kesh Prison.⁶⁷⁸ Hunger strikes are a particularly powerful and evocative form of protest for a number of reasons. The striker has to subjugate the corporeal needs of their body in favour of an abstract cause, namely, the state's recognition of their political status. Thus, the body is the locus of an active protest, and yet, as the degenerative effects of the strike take hold the body inevitably becomes more passive and inactive. In all cases where political recognition is sought the hunger strike forms a powerful metaphor of the state literally starving the subject of their right to representation.⁶⁷⁹ However, in the case of hunger strikers whose political motivation is recognition of independent

⁶⁷⁷ Padraig O'Malley, *Biting at the Grave: The Irish Hunger Strikes and the Politics of Despair* (Boston, 1990); David Beresford, *Ten Dead Men* (London, 1987); Tom Collins, *The Irish Hunger Strike* (Dublin, 1986) R. K. Walker, *The Hunger Strikes* (Edinburgh, 2008); Richard O'Rawe, *Afterlives: The Hunger Strike and the Secret Offer that Changed Irish History* (Dublin, 2010); F. Stuart Ross, *Smashing H Block: The Popular Campaign Against Criminalization and the Irish Hunger Strikes, 1976-1982* (Liverpool, 2011).

⁶⁷⁸ Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: London, 1991), pp. 147-271; Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Irish Modernity*, pp. 116-166. Analyses of the 1981 hunger strikes are inseparable from the 'dirty protest' that preceded it. Both Feldman and Lloyd discuss the dirty protest at length. However, the best article for an understanding of the heavily gendered nature of this protest and the reactions of both the British state, and the Republican community to the involvement of women remains, Begoña Aretxaga, 'Dirty Protest: Symbolic Overdetermination and Gender in Northern Ireland Ethnic Violence', *Ethos*, 23:2 (1995), pp. 123-148.

⁶⁷⁹ Luke Gibbons, 'Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History' in Catherine Hall (ed.), *Cultures of Empire, A Reader: Colonisers in Britain and the Empire of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester, 2000), p. 220.

nationhood the protester inscribes 'the self upon the nation, and the nation upon the self'.⁶⁸⁰ Thus, the 'grotesque spectacle of brinksmanship' between the individual and the state becomes symbolic of the colonial relationship more broadly.⁶⁸¹ James Vernon argues that this particular performance of self-immolation drew its power from the politicisation of hunger in the mid nineteenth century. He claims that, once starvation was no longer understood to be naturally unavoidable it became a political question that was understood in purely moral terms.⁶⁸² This broader understanding of hunger as a moral issue between the state and the subject formed the wider framework that allowed the protest of food refusal to be understood. In the modern period hunger strikes take place, almost exclusively, when the subject is incarcerated by the state. Their power therefore derives from the way in which they directly engage with the power structure of the penal system that makes extensive use of biometrics to assert the state's power over the individual body of the subject.⁶⁸³

Scholars have also given consideration to the historical precedents the republican community invoke when attempting to establish a tradition and lineage for contemporary hunger strikes. George Sweeney, for example, has noted that there is a long established tradition of hunger striking as a means of political redress in Ireland. He cites examples under the Brehon Laws where hunger strikes were used by the disenfranchised to shame

⁶⁸⁰ Tim Pratt and James Vernon, "'Appeal from this fiery bed...': The Colonial Politics of Ghandhi's Fasts and their Metropolitan Reception', *Journal of British Studies*, 44:1 (2005), p. 95.

⁶⁸¹ James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 43.

⁶⁸² *Ibid*, p. 42.

⁶⁸³ Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Irish Modernity*, pp. 125-138. See also, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1991).

landowners into a change of behaviour.⁶⁸⁴ However, caution should be exercised in accepting too readily this apparent historical antecedent. There was no established tradition of hunger striking in Ireland in the period between the medieval and the modern. Furthermore, the Brehon Laws had been largely forgotten until they were republished in 1894 as part of the cultural nationalist movement to rediscover a unique Gaelic past.⁶⁸⁵ The fact that the Brehon Laws were published in a second edition in 1917, following a spate of republican hunger strikes, suggests that this ancient tradition of seeking political redress was retrospectively invoked to give an identifiably Gaelic quality to the protests.⁶⁸⁶ Nonetheless, by 1981 the myth of the hunger strike being used as a centuries long unbroken system of seeking redress had been truly subsumed into republican consciousness.⁶⁸⁷ However, in 1917, when Thomas Ashe undertook his fatal hunger strike, parallels with the tactics deployed by women's and workers' rights movements throughout the British Isles would have been more readily accessible, and relevant, comparisons. These strikes are often presented as noteworthy, but not comparable to republican strikes. When the historical precedents of Irish republican hunger strikes are discussed there is sometimes a brief acknowledgement that the same method of protest had been deployed in the early twentieth century by suffragists in Britain, and an even less common acknowledgement of the practise in Ireland, but equivalency is more likely to be drawn across the lineage of other, male,

⁶⁸⁴ Sweeney, 'Self-Immolation in Ireland', pp. 10-12.

⁶⁸⁵ Laurence Ginnell, *The Brehon Laws: A Legal Handbook* (London, 1894).

⁶⁸⁶ Laurence Ginnell, *The Brehon Laws: A Legal Handbook* (2nd edn, Dublin, 1917).

⁶⁸⁷ George Sweeney, 'Self-Immolative Martyrdom: Explaining the Irish Hungerstrike Tradition, *An Irish Quarterly Review*, 93:371 (2004), pp. 337-348.

republican hunger strikes. The fact that the hunger strikes of suffragettes are treated differently in historical discourse to those of Irish republicans is partly due to differences in the way the two groups characterised their protests. Suffragettes were keen to capitalise on the image of passive females violated by a threateningly male state apparatus and frequently invoked a language of institutionalised rape when referring to practises of forced feeding. Conversely, republicans relied on a discourse of a colonised people who referred to their own culturally specific means of seeking redress, namely, an adaptation of the practises of food refusal described in the Brehon laws. Since the death of Terence MacSwiney hunger strikes by Irish republicans have placed a heavy emphasis on the number of days the striker had refused food. Thus, republicans are able to circumvent the feminised language of passivity by presenting the actions of the hunger striker through a masculinised discourse of endurance. Consequently, the longer food is refused the more the striker's protest is presented as noble and heroic and the more public emotion grows at the states refusal to capitulate. However, it is important to remember, when considering Thomas Ashe's protest and reactions to his death, that it was the strikes of women and trades unionists, alongside Irish political prisoners, that would have formed the context through which his protest would have been understood. Consequently, the analysis of more recent hunger strikes, even those that took place during the War of Independence are helpful only up to a point.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁸ For literature that deals with the hunger strikes of the War of Independence and the Civil War see, Dave Hannigan, *Terence MacSwiney: The Hunger Strike that Rocked an Empire* (Dublin, 2010); Reynolds, 'Modernist Martyrdom', pp. 535-559; Pádraig Ó Fathaigh and Timothy G. Mahon, *Pádraig Ó Fathaigh's War of Independence: Recollections of a Galway*

The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, the actions of Ashe and his contemporaries predate these later strikes and consequently, the latter are of little assistance in elucidating the particular circumstances and motivations of the 1917 strike. The second reason, following from the first, is that the death of Thomas Ashe changed the terms in which hunger strikes were understood. All subsequent strikes were, by necessity different in character to that of Ashe. Following his death, when republicans went on hunger strike they did so in the knowledge that Ashe had died whilst still in the custody of the British state. The British Government had force-fed Ashe precisely to avoid making another martyr to add to those who had faced the firing squad in May 1916. However the nature of hunger striking is that it forces the state, as the focus of the protest to act in one of four ways; to capitulate to the striker's demands, to release the prisoner until their health recovers and then re-intern them, to force-feed the individual, or alternatively, to allow them to complete their fast to its logical conclusion unabated.⁶⁸⁹ Once the state had allowed an individual to die in their custody, whether intentionally or not, they created an environment whereby each subsequent striker entered their strike as a 'willing victim'.⁶⁹⁰ Furthermore, those following the progress of the strike expected that death was a sacrifice the prisoner was willing to make for their cause. A fact that, as we shall see, was constructed in part by the ephemera produced to commemorate Ashe. This was not the case for Thomas Ashe and his fellow hunger strikers in

Gaelic (Cork, 2000), p. 18; Joseph McKenna, *Guerrilla Warfare in the Irish War of Independence, 1919-1921* (London, 2011), pp. 66-73.

⁶⁸⁹ Jon Elster, 'Motivations and Beliefs in Suicide Missions' in Diego Gambetta (ed.) *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford, 2006), p. 237.

⁶⁹⁰ Flynn, *Pawns in the Game*, p. 3.

Mountjoy jail in 1917. They could have reasonably anticipated that the British Government would have either released the men or capitulated to their demands. Up until this point this had largely typified the response of the British Government to such protests, as illustrated by a letter that passed between Siobhan bean an Phaoraigh and Mabel Fitzgerald dated 11 June, 1915 discussing Francis Sheehy-Skeffington's hunger strike; 'so far he has kept his own clothes, and has not been asked to do hard labour, on the grounds that he has eaten nothing since his sentence. In the meantime he has been told if he gives up the hunger strike, he will get everything he wants on the sly'.⁶⁹¹ The British authorities has used forced feeding as a technique to break earlier hunger strikes, however, September 1917 marked a departure when the state openly took a more resolute stand. As Ashe's sister Nora told the Bureau of Military History 'It was the last thing we expected to hear – that he was dead'.⁶⁹²

Sean O'Mahony referred to Ashe as '[t]he first hunger striker'.⁶⁹³ This was a totally factitious representation of his protest. He was neither the first hunger striker in twentieth-century Ireland, nor the first republican hunger striker, nor, was he the first to die as a result of their hunger strike. Thomas Ashe was, however, a republican who was also the first hunger striker of the twentieth century to die whilst still in the custody of the British State. In 1912, Irish suffragettes began a hunger strike, following the examples of their English counterparts.⁶⁹⁴ In doing so, they created a situation in which

⁶⁹¹ Letter from Siobhan bean an Phaoraigh to Mabel Fitzgerald dated 11 June 1915, P80/1524, Desmond Fitzgerald Papers, UCDA.

⁶⁹² Nora Ashe, WS/645, p. 5.

⁶⁹³ Sean O'Mahony, *The First Hunger Striker: Thomas Ashe, 1917* (Dublin, 2001).

⁶⁹⁴ Flynn, *Pawns in the Game*, p. 8.

the British state was compelled to either act, or face the moral indignation caused by allowing a subject to die in its custody.⁶⁹⁵ The British state adopted a policy, parochially referred to as one of 'cat and mouse', in which the prisoner would be released to recuperate once their strength began to wane only to be later rearrested, whereupon the prisoner often resumed their strike.⁶⁹⁶ This policy has been the subject of rigorous academic study and I do not intend to linger too long on the subject.⁶⁹⁷ Suffice it for now to say however, that this policy, whilst famed for its use in dealing with the suffragettes was also used to break the strikes of political activists advocating for other causes that followed their example and took up hunger strikes of their own. During the Dublin Lockout a number of trade unionists, including James Connolly, went on hunger strike.⁶⁹⁸ In fact the first individual credited to have died as a result of hunger strike in twentieth-century Ireland was James Byrne, the secretary of the Bray and Kingstown Trades Council. He began a hunger and thirst strike whilst in prison, and died, after his release, on 1 November 1913.⁶⁹⁹ Furthermore, hunger strike was a tactic that had been gaining currency as a republican weapon during the period of internment. Imprisoned suffragettes, socialists, trades unionists, and advanced nationalists shared a common aim, which was to be recognised as, and afforded the rights of, political prisoners. In 1917 the

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 3-5.

⁶⁹⁶ More formally the policy was called the, Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act, 1913.

⁶⁹⁷ Laura E. Nym Mayhall, *The Millitant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930* (Oxford, 2003); Sophia A. Van Wingarden, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain, 1866-1928* (Basingstoke, 1999); Caroline Howlett, 'Writing on the Body? Representation and Resistance in British Suffragette Accounts of Forcible Feeding', *Genders*, 2:3 (1996), pp. 3-41 and, Elizabeth Crawford, *The Womens Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide, 1866 - 1928*, (Abingdon, 2001).

⁶⁹⁸ Flynn, *Pawns in the Game*, p. 10.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

hunger strike was the commonly deployed tactic for articulating that, so much so that Pratt and Vernon have referred to the period as 'the golden age of hunger strikes'.⁷⁰⁰

In his last poem, *Let me Carry Your Cross for Ireland*, Ashe had written about his willingness to sacrifice himself for Ireland's cause, so much so that Charles Townshend argues that Ashe's poetry 'marked him out as Pearse's most authentic successor'.⁷⁰¹ However, whilst Ashe would be followed to his grave by a number of other hunger strikers throughout the twentieth century, at the time, his death was a tragic deviation from the pattern of political hunger strikes. It is impossible to know categorically whether Ashe intended to die when he began his final hunger strike of September 20, 1917.⁷⁰² However, it is clear that the evidence available to Ashe, when he undertook his last strike, was that he would not be forced to prove his willingness to sacrifice himself.

'One of the most central and complicated rules of hunger striking', Patrick Anderson explains, is 'that hunger strikers must not die directly at the hands of police, military, or prison officials, and yet... their deaths stand as representative of the terror of the state'.⁷⁰³ The power of the protest is, according to Anderson, undermined if the striker is not able to prove that they have the force of will to see the strike through until death. Ashe's death, therefore, would appear to break one of the fundamental rules by which this type of self-immolation can be understood. Did his death represent the

⁷⁰⁰ Pratt and Vernon, "Appeal from this fiery bed...", p. 95.

⁷⁰¹ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 333.

⁷⁰² See Una C Stack, WS/418, N.A.I, p. 2 for details on the circumstances surrounding the strike.

⁷⁰³ Patrick Anderson, *So Much Wasted: Hunger, Performance, and the Morbidity of Resistance* (Durham: London, 2010), p. 125.

murder, or, more charitably, manslaughter, of a subject by the state or a willing sacrifice? Whilst the inquest concluded categorically that the state had failed in its duty of care towards Ashe, the republican committee that organised his funeral, presented his death as a sacrifice he made for their cause. However, once again, we must resist the urge to equate our contemporary understandings of the stakes of republican hunger strikes with the way they were understood in 1917. A clearer understanding of the way hunger strikes were understood in 1917 can be seen in the following transcription of a handbill circulated in Dublin whilst men interned in Lewes Jail, including Thomas Ashe, were on hunger strike;

STRIKE IN LEWES JAIL.

121 Irishmen in Lewes Jail ARE BEING SLOWLY STARVED TO DEATH England has already released **3**, only in time to save her from the responsibility of their **Death in Jail**. As a protest against the treatment, one man went on a **Hunger Strike**. He was threatened that he should be removed to a **Criminal Lunatic Asylum**. About **12** others are suffering from Glandular trouble evidently of Tubercular nature. **The remainder are ON STRIKE to Force their Demands to be Treated as PRISONERS OF WAR.** In consequence they are now made to endure the **Horrors of Solitary Confinement** in badly ventilated Cells, deprived of all Visits and Letters and **Prevented from going to Mass. A PUBLIC MEETING** Will be held at BERESFORD PLACE, on SUNDAY, JUNE 10 at 7.30, p.m.⁷⁰⁴

Notice that, in this appeal, it is the British Government who was accused of starving the men to death. By the end of the flyer it is stated that men were on hunger strike and asserts this as an active display of political agency. However, there is no indication whatsoever that these strikes would end in death. In fact, there is an implicit certainty that the strikers would be released in order to prevent deaths in the jail. Any culpability for a death or

⁷⁰⁴ Public Meeting Re: Strike in Lewes Jail 10 June 1916, 18NO/1D12/23, KGM.

diminished physical health was understood, according to the flyer, to be the fault of the British state rather than the inevitable consequence of an active sacrificial protest by the prisoners in question. One of Ashe's guards informed the inquest, and later the BMH, that Ashe told Dr. Dowdall prior to his first forced feeding that 'he would go down to posterity crowned with the blood of innocent Irishmen on his soul'.⁷⁰⁵ The issue of culpability is a recurrent theme in accounts of Ashe's death. A particular focus is placed upon whether Ashe died in Mountjoy jail or in the Mater hospital. Whilst the British authorities were keen to assert that Ashe was removed to the Mater hospital to receive medical care before his death republicans claimed he was dead before he left the prison.⁷⁰⁶ The point being that if the former account was to be believed then the state had attempted to rectify the damage caused by the forced feeding, if the latter account was accurate then it intensified the degree to which the authorities had failed in their duty of care towards the prisoner. Ashe's guard perhaps comes closest to fully articulating the degree to which the prison authorities recognised the importance of this distinction when he recalled how worried they were that they would not be able to get Ashe 'out quick enough'.⁷⁰⁷ Crucially, the emphasis was on getting Ashe *out* of the prison, and not *to*, the hospital.

To conclude, when Thomas Ashe undertook his last, and fatal, hunger strike it was a method of protest that had been exercised by a number of political groups to coerce the British state into affording them the rights of political prisoners within the penal system. Thomas Ashe has frequently

⁷⁰⁵ Patrick J. Berry, WS/942, NLI, p. 4.

⁷⁰⁶ Joseph V. Lawless, WS/1043, NAI, p. 229.

⁷⁰⁷ Patrick J. Berry, WS/942, p. 4.

been under represented in literature dealing with Irish republican hunger strikes. The reasons for this appear to be manifold. Firstly, unlike later republican hunger strikers who died of the eventual effects of starvation, Ashe died as a result of forcible feeding. Secondly, Ashe was the first modern Irish republican to die as a consequence of this method of protest and consequently, the context of his death is better understood in relation to the contemporaneous hunger strikes of women and trade unionists. An inseparable consideration from this last point is that scholars seek to understand Irish political hunger strikes in their own terms and republican prisoners following Ashe placed their protests within a teleology of self-immolation drawn from Gaelic precedents and, in the modern period, from Ashe's death. Republican mythology around hunger striking does not acknowledge the more salient contemporary precedents of hunger strikes by those in other political movements. However, this chapter will now move on to explore further the 'culpability' of the British authorities in Ashe's death, and the outrage it provoked. The death provided an incomparable propaganda platform for the revived republican community. Furthermore, their possession of Ashe's body allowed them to return to an older tradition of public funerals in which the cortege would form an emotive focal point through which republicans could reclaim the city streets.

A Fenian Funeral for a Modern Republican.

The 'tactical blunder' made by the British State in allowing Ashe to die in their custody was one that the 'Irish leaders were bound to exploit to the

full'.⁷⁰⁸ The funeral was a highly staged affair in which republicans were able to process the body of their martyr through the streets of Dublin. In doing so, they brought together the narratives of sacrifice and insurrection that had been told, retold and circulated since the Rising.

As this chapter noted earlier, the culpability of the British State for Ashe's death prevented it from being self-sacrifice in the strictest sense. However, the funeral appeared to overcome that obstacle by presenting Ashe as a Christ-like martyr, whose noble sacrifice had been compounded by the barbarity of the British state. Framing Ashe's death in these terms restored agency to him.

Turning our attention to the organisation of the funeral itself it is important to note that unlike previous republican memorial processions no additional trains were laid on to bring Ashe's sympathisers to Dublin from the other Irish counties. This was Thomas Brophy claims, due to 'growing disenchantment at plans to conscript Irishmen to fight in the British Army, and [the] constraints of a war-time economy'.⁷⁰⁹ It is equally probable that the British authorities simply did not wish to facilitate the assembly of advanced nationalists for a procession through the centre of Dublin, to mourn a man who had taken up arms against them the year before. Despite this logistical problem an estimated 35,000 people took part in the procession to convey Ashe's remains to Glasnevin after he had lain in state for one and a half days in the City Hall.⁷¹⁰ This figure is a full 25,000 more individuals than are said to have attended O'Donovan Rossa's funeral; and

⁷⁰⁸ Joseph V. Lawless, WS/1043, p. 230.

⁷⁰⁹ Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence', p. 146.

⁷¹⁰ Beresford, *Ten Dead Men*, p. 17.

this is to say nothing of the vast number of spectators.⁷¹¹ The increased numbers of those who participated in escorting Ashe's remains to Glasnevin compared with earlier nationalist funerals are important as, before any other symbolism is taken into account, they visually conveyed the swelling ranks of the Volunteers, and the greatly enlarged support for Sinn Féin. Equally significant were the members of the clergy, estimated to number between one hundred and fifty and two hundred, who led Ashe's cortege through the city streets, which can only be read as a hitherto unique display of support of advanced nationalism by the Catholic Church.⁷¹² The funeral was organised under the auspices of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee, the same organisation behind the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa and of which Thomas Clarke had been the head. There is also evidence of significant involvement by the INAAVDF, where Kathleen Clarke, Thomas' widow, was a prominent figure. Additionally, whilst both the cortege of O'Donovan Rossa and Ashe went, over O'Connell bridge, up Sackville Street, past Parnell Square, before following Blessington Street on towards the Finglas road to reach Glasnevin cemetery, the processions took different routes between the City Hall and the bridge.⁷¹³ O'Donovan Rossa's cortege passed in a circuit around the symbolic Georgian centre of the City, moving past the seat of the old Irish Parliament, the municipal space of St. Stephen's Green, and Trinity

⁷¹¹ Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence', p. 155.

⁷¹² Elsie Mahaffy suggests that the clergy escorting Ashe's remains numbered one hundred and fifty whereas George Sweeney suggests the number was two hundred. However, Mahaffy's first hand account was likely to have been an estimate based on observation and George Sweeney's article contains a number of factual inaccuracies raising questions about the reliability of his figures. Consequently, it seems reasonable to suggest that the figure can be estimated at somewhere in between these figures. See, 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074 and Sweeney, 'Self-Immolative Martyrdom', p. 340.

⁷¹³ Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence', p. 191.

College Dublin. Ashe's cortege went west from the city centre, towards Kilmainham Gaol where the leaders of the Rising had been shot, passing the site of Robert Emmet's execution and Christ Church Cathedral as it did so. It then moved along to the southern quays, parallel to Bachelor's Walk, where three civilians had been shot during the Volunteers' return from the Howth gun-landing in 1913, in order to reach O'Connell Bridge.⁷¹⁴ Once on the other side of the bridge the procession route took them past the Mater Hospital where Ashe had died, and where two of his fellow hunger strikers were receiving treatment, and Mountjoy Prison, where he had undergone his fatal forced feeding.⁷¹⁵ As chapter one of this thesis recognised, it was common for republican funerals to pass by Dublin landmarks. However, the incorporation of sites linked directly to the martyr being processed was made possible because Ashe had passed his final days in Dublin amidst a huge amount of publicity rather than being repatriated from America.

The route taken by the cortege had the effect of developing the nationalist topography of Dublin by incorporating twentieth-century sites of resistance to British rule and linking them back to a longer lineage of rebellion. Ashe's funeral was 'a re-staging' of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral.⁷¹⁶ Those who came to watch his cortege pass by would be instantly reminded of the funeral of the latter only two years before. This reminder intimately tied Ashe to the Fenian past. A fact that was reinforced by Collin's exceptionally brief graveside oration: 'The volley we have just heard is the

⁷¹⁴ The shootings at Bachelor's Walk caused an outpouring of public grief and condemnation. See Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, pp. 5-7 for further information.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., p. 155. As noted earlier, there was some dispute over whether Ashe was already dead on arrival at the Mater Hospital. However, it was at the Mater Hospital that Ashe was pronounced dead, and his body laid out until it could be removed to the City Hall.

⁷¹⁶ Joseph V. Lawless, WS/1043, p. 231.

only speech it is proper to make above the grave of a dead Fenian'.⁷¹⁷ The separate route taken by the procession that took Ashe to Glasnevin paid homage to physical force republicanism in Dublin and those who had died as a result of it. With the exception of the links with Robert Emmet on Thomas Street, the other symbolic references related to the twentieth century. The effect was to publicise a resurrected physical force movement, who were the natural heirs and decedents of Emmet, and the Fenians, and who were committed to achieving an independent Irish state. Additionally, it is important to bear in mind that the creation of a link across generations of Irish separatism was communicated, not only through the landmarks that were passed between City Hall and Glasnevin, but by the way in which that space was used. For example, the band of the National Foresters played *The Memory of the Dead* as the cortege made its way towards the Mater Hospital.⁷¹⁸ The song would have lasted for around three minutes and the procession passed Mountjoy Prison before moving towards the Mater Hospital. As such, the music would have played at the point at which the cortege retraced Ashe's last journey in life. The song, which initially appeared in 1843, is also known as *Who Fears to Speak of Ninety-Eight?* However, following the Rising handbills and sheet music circulated widely that adapted the song to tell the story of Pearse and his compatriots and re-titled it *Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week?*⁷¹⁹ The words and tune to each version of the song was becoming increasingly well known, and heard, in

⁷¹⁷ Michael Collins quoted in Beresford, *Ten Dead Men*, p. 17. Prior to this famous statement Collins has also spoken briefly in Irish but that section of the graveside panegyric was never recorded.

⁷¹⁸ Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence', p. 152.

⁷¹⁹ Handbill of *Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week* from a scrapbook by an unknown compiler, CD 266/1/1, Contemporary Documents Collection, BMH.

Dublin by the time of Ashe's death.⁷²⁰ The performance of the song 'further showed the ability of political funeral organisers to mix sacred and secular, historical and popular cultures to create a hybrid tradition to suit their purposes'.⁷²¹ Furthermore, one should not underestimate the way in which playing such rousing music in a location where Ashe's fellow strikers were still incarcerated heightened the defiance shown towards the British authorities. Playing *Who Fears to Speak of '98?* at this juncture in the proceedings meant that, not only had the funeral taken over the streets of the city in a display of republican strength, they were also undermining the power of the penal system by including the prisoners in the events in the street. The final verse of the amended song reads

The brave have gone to linger on
Beneath the tyrant's heel;
We know they pray another day
With clang of clashing steel;
And from their cells their voices swell
And fondly call on you.
Then ask, men, the tasks, men,
That yet remain to do.⁷²²

The effect of playing this song as the funeral made its way past Mountjoy Jail was to imply that the voices that swelled from the cells were in fact those of the men inside the prison walls who called on men on the streets outside to follow their example.

Ernie O'Malley highlighted the significance of the funeral stating succinctly, 'The Volunteers' he wrote, 'had held the streets of the capital, had kept order, had marched in the forbidden formations, had worn uniforms. A

⁷²⁰ Alter, 'Symbols of Irish Nationalism', p. 16.

⁷²¹ Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence', p. 152.

⁷²² Handbill of *Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week* from a scrapbook by an unknown compiler, CD 266/1/1, Contemporary Documents Collection.

firing squad had carried rifles and fired volleys'.⁷²³ The funeral was an uncompromising display of the strength of Sinn Féin and the renewed militarism of the Volunteers. For instance, when the Lord Mayor, acting on behalf of Dublin Corporation, sought the necessary ascent and arrangements to be made for the lying-in-state, he was refused, but this was of little consequence as Ashe's coffin was already *en route* under a Volunteer guard.⁷²⁴ The Irish Chief Secretary made one last ditch attempt to regain control of the city 'forbidding the holding of processions and the carrying of arms in connection with the funeral'.⁷²⁵ This order was ignored, by the General Officer Commanding the British forces in Ireland, and the military were withdrawn to the barracks.⁷²⁶ As Joseph V. Lawless stated 'the display of moral force, constituted by the public defiance of the British orders, and the numbers of the people who signified their attachment to the national cause by following the coffin of the dead leader, was a significant milestone in the long road to freedom'.⁷²⁷ The effect of the Volunteers' display as they brought the body of their dead leader into City Hall was to show the rising power of Sinn Féin. Conversely, the inability of the various arms of the British administration to agree to one consistent approach and enforce it indicated the gradually weakening body of the British state.⁷²⁸ Individuals from the unionist community also interpreted the failure to prevent a large-

⁷²³ O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 68.

⁷²⁴ William T. Cosgrave, WS/268, NAI, p. 40.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

⁷²⁷ Joseph V. Lawless, WS/1043, p. 232.

⁷²⁸ The Dublin Corporation was, by this time, dominated by those with advanced nationalist sympathies. However, it was still a bureaucratic arbiter of British rule in Ireland.

scale funeral for a republican leader in the centre of Dublin as a sign of weakness on the part of the British authorities. Elsie Mahaffy wrote that

Also and worse than all [the authorities] allowed this huge funeral for the rebel and suicide to be arranged. He having first been taken to the R.C. Pro Cathedral with 24 priests walking in front and there [the] last requiem mass [was said. He] was then laid in state in the city hall for 2 days when day and night a stream of people paid honour to his crimes.⁷²⁹

The death of Thomas Ashe afforded the advanced nationalist community an opportunity that had been denied them following the Rising. The number of casualties it produced had meant that there was no opportunity for public funerals on the scale of Rossa or Ashe. The refusal of the British to relinquish control of the bodies of the men executed for their leadership of the rebellion, and their decision to bury them in a quicklime grave at Arbour Hill, was specifically calculated to deny the advanced nationalist community this opportunity. Rigorous attempts were made to secure the bodies of Pearse and his fellow leaders. In fact, when Muriel MacDonagh died in July, 1917 the INAAVDF, who organised her funeral, were anxious that she should be interned as close to the Fenian plot in Glasnevin as possible. The logic behind this was that they would, at some point, succeed in their endeavours to have the body of her husband, and those of the other leaders, moved from Arbour Hill, and he would be interned with her. A handbill, circulated in the same month, indicates that the posthumous treatment of the bodies of the Rising's leaders was used as propaganda to evoke sympathy for the rebels and their bereaved families; it

⁷²⁹ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

also asserts the brutality of the British government who, the flyer implies, not only executed the men, but also, defiled them in death.

Irishmen and Women! REMEMBER that though our Prisoners are free, the remains of their sixteen **MARTYRED LEADERS** are still in the possession of the British Government. **A PUBLIC MEETING** will be held in the Mansion House, Dublin, Monday 16th July, 1917 at 8p.m. **To Demand those Bodies for Christian** Burial Remember that fourteen of them still lie uncoffined [sic] in **Arbour Hill Barrack Yard**. Dia Saoire Eire.⁷³⁰

The charge that the men were refused a Christian burial also implies that while the bodies lay in Arbour Hill, it was not merely the corpse that the government retained control over, but the immortal soul that lay trapped and awaiting a fitting burial.

This meeting at the Mansion House took place just over two months before Thomas Ashe died on hunger strike. Both the assembly itself, and the publicity surrounding it, were designed to create outrage amongst the populace over the accusation that the British state had failed to treat the bodies of those executed with dignity and regard to their faith. Try as the organisers might however, it could not hope to achieve the same emotive response and propaganda boom that typified a public funeral.⁷³¹ Many of the reasons for this lay in the symbolic power of the presence of the corpse itself.⁷³² It provided a focal point, the proximity to which denoted the hierarchy of importance placed on each constitutive element or group involved in the mourning of the individual.⁷³³ During the two days that

⁷³⁰ Handbill, BOR F13/10, Birth of the Republic Ephemera Collection, DCA.

⁷³¹ Lawrence J. Taylor explains the ways in which this is especially the case in Ireland and, in so doing, also discusses the importance of martyrdom and material objects within Irish political funerals. See, Lawrence J. Taylor, 'Bás InEirinn: Cultural Constructions of Death in Ireland', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 62:4 (1989), pp. 175-187.

⁷³² Verdery, 'Dead Bodies Animate the Study of Politics', p. 305.

⁷³³ Brophy, 'On Church Grounds', p. 503.

Ashe's remains lay in state at City Hall thousands of individuals took the opportunity to file past his coffin.⁷³⁴ Additionally, ephemera provided a greater number of mourners proximity to the body of Ashe than would normally have been accommodated, albeit figuratively. Ephemera were a significant feature of the funeral. So much so that it is discussed, in this chapter, under its own sub-heading.

Once the procession reached Glasnevin however, and not least because the sheer number of mourners could not be accommodated in the cemetery, proximity to Ashe's physical remains was reserved for a select elite. The Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee who organised the funeral (as they had O'Donovan Rossa's) issued tickets of admission to the graveside. A number of these tickets remain scattered through the archives today suggesting the value placed on them by the owner.⁷³⁵ Implicit in the issue of these tickets is the notion that those individuals who were admitted to the graveside benefited from a closer communion with the republican movement's previous martyrs through their proximity to Ashe's corporeal remains and the transcendental power they possessed.

Ashe's funeral was also an opportunity for the returned internees to visibly reclaim control of the advanced nationalist movement and the public space of Dublin city centre. The subject of internment, both in terms of the effect of the absence of men, and the treatment of the homecomings, has been dealt with earlier in this thesis. However, it is important to note the decidedly militaristic character of Ashe's funeral and proximity to his body

⁷³⁴ Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, p. 207.

⁷³⁵ Admit Bearer to the Graveside of Thomas Ashe, Card, 18LG/1C35/12, KGM.

at all times by members of the Irish Volunteers. When Jeremiah O' Donovan Rossa was buried the presence of uniformed men showed the growth of the Volunteers in Ireland. In contrast, when Ashe died, it became particularly important *within* the movement who formed the guard over his body. The Volunteers of Ashe's old battalion in Fingal took the initiative to form a uniformed guard of honour over his body at the hospital until further arrangements could be made. They dressed Ashe in the uniform he had worn at Ashbourne during Easter Week.⁷³⁶ The symbolic importance of protecting and standing guard over Ashe's body was soon handed over, as 'the city battalions were anxious to have the honour of supplying guards'.⁷³⁷ It was detachments from the four city battalions that escorted Ashe's coffin to City Hall. The effect of this was to illustrate that 'Ashe was no longer merely the commandant of the Fingal Volunteers. He had joined the ranks of the immortals and his name was written on the national oscutcheon'.⁷³⁸ Finally, it was four of Ashe's Volunteer comrades from his time in Lewes prison who bore his coffin from City Hall into the cortege. The order in which the guard was changed from his local Volunteer unit, to the Volunteer units of Dublin city, to those who endured imprisonment alongside Ashe in Lewes allegorically demonstrated Ashe's own transition from a local Volunteer to a national figurehead. The symbolism was clear, the men of the armed republican movement would stand guard over their fallen leader and comrade, protecting both his body and his legacy. As if to reiterate this message, the women who had fought alongside the men in Easter week and,

⁷³⁶ Joseph V. Lawless, WS/1043, p. 230.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Ibid.

if they had not also been suffering the deprivations of internment, had worked tirelessly in the men's absence to mobilise popular support, were relegated once again to the back of the procession.⁷³⁹

Proximity to Ashe's cortege and coffin could, and did, confer status on the individual. It marked them out as significant within the community of assembled advanced nationalists. Equally, relegation from this vicinity reinforced a message to the individual and those observing them that their politics should no longer garner popular support. However, on occasion it was the proximity of the individual to the coffin that served to validate the importance of Ashe. This was most certainly the case when, for example, the Bishops and clergymen led Ashe's cortege through the streets of Dublin. Their doing so conveyed a message to observers that the Catholic Church was willing to openly display its support for advanced nationalism. Archbishop Walsh followed the coffin directly behind the chief mourners. He was the first Archbishop to ever attend the funeral of an Irish rebel but, despite his ailing health he said wrote quite simply that he felt 'it a duty...to take part in the public protest that will find expression in the funeral'.⁷⁴⁰ The visual imagery was one of the republican and secular martyr, being canonised by the Church authorities.

However, the organisers were faced with a particular challenge. Thomas Ashe was a known figure. His image had circulated widely on the Powell Press postcards and details of his fight at Ashbourne had been talked about extensively as part of the wider literature of the Rising. His return to

⁷³⁹ For the full order of the procession see 'Funeral of Tomás Ashe: Order of Funeral and Mobilisation, CD 64/4/2, Contemporary Documents Collections, BMH.

⁷⁴⁰ Archbishop Walsh to the Lord Mayor of Dublin quoted in Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, p. 207.

Ireland, along with the other internees had been a highly public affair and in the interim before he was jailed again he had been vociferous in his public speeches condemning the government.⁷⁴¹ Indeed, the charge that led to his final custodial sentence in Mountjoy was one of sedition. During the period of internment Ashe's capacity for leadership had, along with a small number of other men, been recognised by his fellow internees.⁷⁴² At the time of his death he was the head of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.⁷⁴³ This fervent activity, particularly in the year leading up to his death, meant that, unlike Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, the organisers of Ashe's funeral had to contend with an extensive record of his views and opinions. O'Donovan Rossa, as mentioned previously, had died in exile having lived to a mature age; his direct participation in the cause of Irish freedom having ceased years before. Consequently, it was possible to make pronouncements about his attitudes and support for a narrative without providing proof. Rossa's body could become the vehicle through which a contemporary political agenda could be narrated for those observing. It was impossible to appropriate Ashe's body in the same way. Additionally, organisers had to contend with the strength of negative opinion towards Ashe from some communities. Elsie Mahaffy, for example, referred to Ashe as 'one of the fiercest and cruellest of the Rebellion leaders'.⁷⁴⁴

The funeral of Thomas Ashe was, as the discussion about the guard of honour has illustrated, a highly staged performance; during which his body

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 201-202.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

was escorted by vast numbers of advanced nationalists, through the streets of Dublin, passing landmarks that held symbolic relevance to the recent history of armed rebellion. In doing so the funeral, which linked Ashe's death to past rebellions and the Fenian tradition, was designed to display defiance towards, and critique of, the British government. The procession of Ashe's body through the streets of Dublin afforded Sinn Féin a propaganda opportunity to communicate with the watching crowds a narrative of service and sacrifice to a republican ideal, and to draw together the disparate elements of narrative and myth through a reengagement with the city. Volunteers involved in the funeral recognised the crucial significance of Ashe's physical remains claiming that 'the body of Ashe [would] move the people to yet another effort to reach the goal of freedom'.⁷⁴⁵ The use of ephemera was intrinsic to this communication, so much so that it is to a more detailed analysis of the types of ephemera produced, and the way they were used, that this chapter now turns its attention.

Ephemera and the Republican Martyr

Ephemera, as the previous chapter of this thesis noted, had been circulated throughout the period under consideration. One function of these ephemera was that it allowed individuals to mediate their relationship to, and interaction with, politico-cultural events such as commemorations. In chapter one a discussion of the souvenir publication of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral was discussed. Whilst it was significant it appears to have been the

⁷⁴⁵ Joseph V. Lawless, WS/1043, p. 231.

only manufactured piece of ephemera related to the event. What marked Ashe's funeral as distinct from its predecessors therefore was the breadth of material produced alongside the particular way in which, and the speed with which it was circulated. The organizers of Ashe's funeral pre-empted the demand for ephemera and catered for it by producing objects that were similar to those already in circulation that commemorated the leaders of the Easter Rising. Following the funeral, commercially interested parties produced items, such as postcards showing the cortege moving through the city.⁷⁴⁶ Significantly though, it appears from the available evidence that the advanced nationalist press retained control over the production and circulation of material before and during the funeral. Thus indicating a recognition of how important ephemera had become in constructing a narrative of events, in this case the death of Thomas Ashe, for a wider audience. The ephemera produced in late September 1917 to mark the death of the hunger striker functioned, it will be argued, as relics. They used modern technology to provide crowds lining the procession route with his image and his poetry thus giving each individual a piece of Ashe, albeit figuratively. The recognition of these ephemera as relics both relied on, and reinforced, a shared religio-cultural understanding of Catholicism, to elevate Ashe to a platform of secular sainthood.

Chapter three of this thesis has addressed the circulation of ephemera in the aftermath of the Rising, the initial search for relics of the leaders, and indeed, of the destroyed city itself. Following Easter Week 1916

⁷⁴⁶ Funeral Procession of Thomas Ashe, 18PC/1A45/04, KGM and The Firing Party at the Graveside of Thomas Ashe, 18PD/1A13/20, KGM. Badges were also produced that bore Ashe's image and the word 'remember'. For an illustrative example see, Commemorative Pin Badge, 18BG/1C16/19, KGM.

an interpretive discourse began to emerge, both within advanced nationalism and in the wider public arena which it operated, of willing male sacrifice in service of the nation, the emotional burden of which was to be borne by the women they left behind. However, 'the symbolic core of those motifs is the blood sacrifice – the idea that the land can only be restored to fertility by being watered by the blood of young men'.⁷⁴⁷ Consequently, it was essential that the Volunteers' were represented, not only as a legitimate army, but also a body of men who would be willing to shed their blood for the Irish nation when required to do so. Thomas Ashe's role as the leader of the rebels most successful military campaign of the Rising, his subsequent political activity, and eventually his 'ghastly' death was used as proof that a new generation of men, radicalized by the events of Easter Week, would be willing to take up the mantle of their lost leaders.⁷⁴⁸ The wave of executions that came after the Rising took place in the context of civilian, rebel, and British deaths and casualties. Furthermore, as discussed previously, republicans were denied the chance to stage large scale funerals. Even if the British authorities had relinquished control of the leaders' bodies, the condition of the city, the strain on the cemeteries, and the internment of so many advanced nationalists meant that a funeral on the scale of O'Donovan Rossa or Ashe would have been impossible, and, from a propaganda perspective, counterintuitive.⁷⁴⁹ Consequently, there was limited scope to focus on the impact of any one death in particular. However, when Ashe died in September 1917 he did so as a lone individual in a prison hunger strike

⁷⁴⁷ Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Irish Modernity*, p. 120.

⁷⁴⁸ Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 398.

⁷⁴⁹ For an account on the strain on the cemeteries, compounded by the gravediggers strike, see Letters from the Laity to Archbishop Walsh, 385/4, Walsh Papers 1916, DDA.

and not as the leader of an open insurrection, and this fact altered the posthumous interpretation of his death from those who were executed after the Rising. Whilst he was, in fact, recognised by his compatriots as a leader, and had been taking part in a mass protest; in death he was represented as an ordinary man who had been made great by his act of lone sacrifice. He became a martyr around whom the Church, the public, and republicans could all coalesce. Moreover, his connection to the Rising allowed for those executed for their part in the events of Easter Week to be retrospectively mourned as victims of colonial brutality. The circulation of ephemera, and the careful staging of his funeral helped to convey and reinforce the canonisation of Ashe, not only as a martyr but also, as a secular saint. Furthermore, there was a distinction between the ephemera produced in the wake of the Rising and those produced for Ashe's funeral. In the latter instance the mass produced ephemera came to be understood as a relic through its proximity to the hunger striker's physical body. His self-immolation was presented as an extreme, but legitimate, course of action that he was driven to by the brutality and injustice of British rule. In considering how Ashe was recast as not only a martyr but also a secular saint following his death, it is useful to follow Peter Brown's definition of sainthood in his foundational thesis on the Cult of Saints.⁷⁵⁰ Brown argues that the key features of the Cult of Saints were that, a mortal individual, through deep piousness and virtuous deeds would, upon their death, be elevated, body and soul, to a place in God's presence. Their corporeal remains however, also remained concretely in the realm of earthly existence

⁷⁵⁰ Brown, *The Cult of Saints*, p. 60.

and thus, they transcended the divide between heaven and earth. Their mortality also meant that they served as an example. Saints served as a promise that humans could attain a sanctified place at God's right hand. Most importantly for our purposes however, was the belief that to own a piece, or relic, of the saint was to share in the temporal transcendence they had enjoyed, a belief that the relic brought you physically and literally, closer to God's presence.

Traditionally, relics were required to be an actual piece of the individual. Following the Rising however, relic hunters were content to settle for an item that had been owned and used by the deceased. Items that had been created by the deceased were also particularly sought after for example, letters, art works, drafts of poems and speeches.⁷⁵¹ These latter relics possessed, not only, the value of having been touched and handled by the martyr in question, but also contained a direct relationship to their thoughts. In the case of Thomas Ashe this extension to the definition of a traditional relic expanded even further to include mass produced items such as handbills of his final poem, *Let Me Carry Your Cross for Ireland*, that was distributed widely. The circulation of these relics assisted the funeral organisers in using the event as a platform for the wider articulation of a republican identity and their political agenda. Ashe's poem became his own epitaph and, was used to speak on behalf of, and sanctify, the cause for which he died. In the most frequently quoted stanza of the poem Ashe writes, 'Let them do with my body whate'er they will/ my spirit I offer to

⁷⁵¹ Catalogue of Sale in Mansion House for Prisoners Dependants Fund 1917, 18BK/1K55/09.

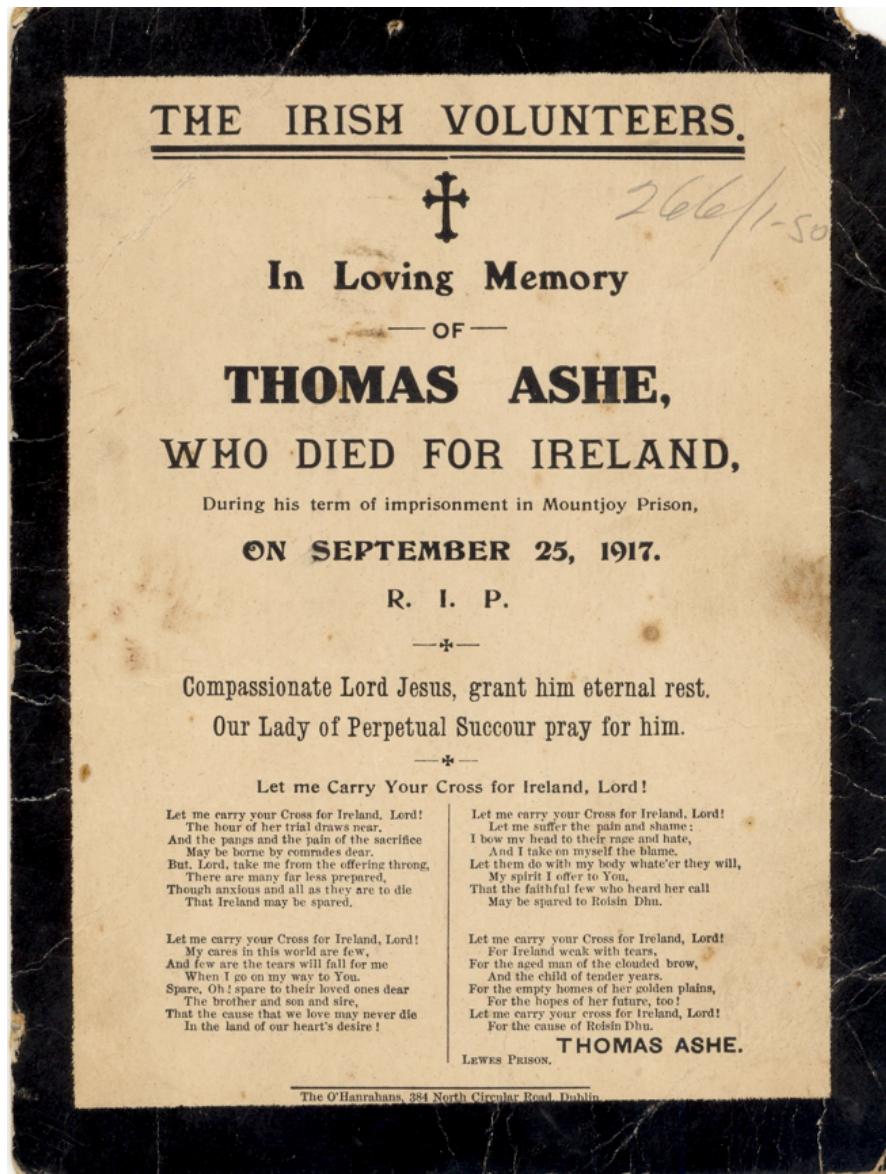
You'.⁷⁵² This sentiment invokes the fate of the sixteen men executed following the Rising whose bodies were withheld by the British state, yet at the same time, Ashe uses his piety as a mark of defiance against the symbolic power of that gesture. His indifference towards the fate of his corporeal remains instantly limits the authority of the State over him. The fact that Ashe had directly addressed the control and treatment of his remains served to add to the impact of the Volunteer's loyal protection of his corpse against the intrusion of the British authorities. The poem also directly invoked the theme of blood sacrifice, which as this thesis has continued to argue, became a prominent interpretive narrative of the Rising.

And the pangs and the pain of sacrifice
May be borne by comrades dear,
But, Lord, take me from the offering throng,
There are many far less prepared,
Though anxious and all as they are to die
That Ireland may be spared.

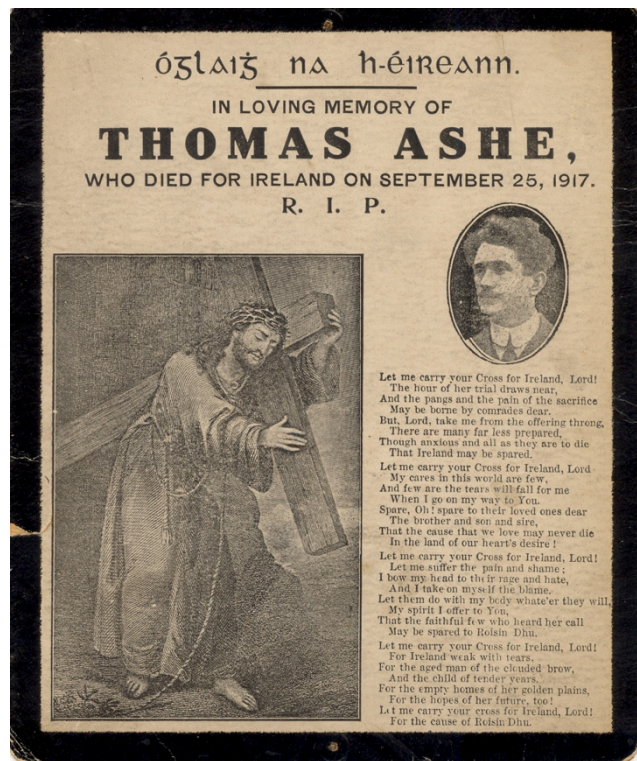
In this stanza Ashe offers himself up as a sacrifice to God in the name of Ireland reiterating his preparedness to do so. However, it is also made clear that in his wake there would be men among his comrades who were 'anxious' to follow his example. Consequently, as his poem circulated on assorted ephemera Ashe's hand was present, not only in writing his own epitaph, but also in promulgating the language of blood sacrifice as the ethos guiding the republican movement. The ephemera that circulated following Ashe's death overwhelmingly bore part, or all, of *Let me Carry Your Cross for Ireland, Lord* [Fig 9]. However, what is of equal significance is the way that a

⁷⁵² For full text see [Fig 9] and [Fig 10].

recurrent image of the dead hunger striker was used, frequently alongside religious imagery and the poem, on memorial cards [Fig 10 & 11].



[Fig 9] A Memorial Card produced to commemorate the death of Thomas Ashe, 18MT 1C11 11, Kilmainham Gaol Museum. Image reproduced by kind permission of Kilmainham Gaol Museum.



[Fig 10] A Memorial Card produced to commemorate the death of Thomas Ashe bearing his image and an illustration of Christ carrying his own cross, 18MT 1C11 29, Kilmainham Gaol Museum. Image reproduced by kind permission of Kilmainham Gaol Museum.



[Fig 11] A Memorial Card produced to commemorate the death of Thomas Ashe bearing his image, 18PD 1A18 21, Kilmainham Gaol Museum. Image reproduced by kind permission of Kilmainham Gaol Museum.

The images above depict three examples of memorial cards produced to mark Ashe's death. As with the leaders of the Easter Rising it would appear that one consistent image of the dead hunger striker was circulated, which was the same as that used for the first Powell Press postcard of Ashe released in 1916. Consequently, it would have already been a familiar image. Its use on memorial cards and other assorted ephemera contextualized the death for the viewer and made a visual association between his death and the execution of the Risings leaders. However, more than this, when one considers the iconography of saints, who are typically depicted with something that illustrates the means of their martyrdom, illustrating a hunger strike succinctly bears obvious complications. However, in consistently reproducing the 'last poem of Thomas Ashe', written in Lewes prison, where he had been on hunger strike and in which he categorically states his willingness to make a martyr of himself a consistency to his representation was achieved that bore modern day equivalence to the iconography of saints.

It is further argued here that to possess one of these memorial cards was equivalent to the ownership of a relic. Modern technology meant that a true likeness of Ashe, or his final poem, could be mass-produced and widely circulated and thus, allowed people to own a part of Ashe himself. Additionally, the fact that both the image and the choice of poem remained stable allowed for a communally held idea of the sanctified rebel. The poem was also printed as a flyer to be distributed in which a clear link was drawn between his role in the Rising, his internment in Lewes Jail and his eventual

death on hunger strike in Mountjoy prison.⁷⁵³ This implicitly brought the leaders of the Easter Rising unambiguously into the cult of saints evoked through the production of relics after Ashe's death. Furthermore, it alludes to the hunger strikes engaged in by interned men in Lewes Jail and uses Ashe's death to hint at the prisoners still refusing food in Mountjoy Prison at the time of his funeral. The effect was to meld together the two seemingly conflicting elements between the unique sacrifice attributed to sainthood and the promise, or conversely threat, that more men were willing to give their lives for the republican cause.

Other ephemera were also produced to mark the death of Thomas Ashe. Most noticeably, the Powell Press released an addendum to their initial postcard collection of prominent figures of the Rising, which already included an image of Ashe [Fig 12]. In doing so, Ashe's death was illustrated as, simultaneously, the final coda to the Rising, and a fulfilment of the promise, inherent in the motif of blood sacrifice, of recurrent martyrdom.

⁷⁵³ A copy of which can be seen in the Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637. The flyer clearer states that the poem was written in Lewes Prison.



[Fig 12] Powell Press postcard depicting Thomas Ashe from the Scrapbook of Frank Martin, MS/33,695/1, National Library of Ireland. Image reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Ireland.. It reads The Late Thomas Ashe (Leader of the North County Dublin Volunteers in the Rising) Sentenced to Death - sentence commuted to Penal Servitude for Life. Released in the General Amnesty... re-arrested 18th August 1917 and sentenced to One Year with hard labour [sic]. Died, 25th September, 1917, from effects of Prison Hunger Strike.

In the explanatory note on the Powell Press postcard Ashe's life had been encapsulated into a few lines of text that established his credentials. Implicit in the circulation of these items is that Ashe's struggle was a path to which all Irishmen should aspire. The text asserts his militarism, leadership, and continual defiance of the British state. The specific mention that his death sentence was commuted places him, in the reader's mind, amongst the names of the Rising's leaders. Meanwhile, the image chosen of him in his piper's uniform established his culturally Gaelic identity. In addition to ephemera bearing Ashe's image or final poem a number of laments and ballads, written by those involved in the republican movement, were also circulated. Seán O'Casey was particularly prolific.⁷⁵⁴ He wrote *Thomas Ashe, A Lament for Thomas Ashe*, and a brief booklet giving details of the hunger strikes life entitled *The Story of Thomas Ashe*, which sold for two pence.⁷⁵⁵ Seán O'Casey's biographer suggests that the less polished piece of verse, *A Lament for Thomas Ashe*, was completed in time for the funeral and may have been circulated outside of Mountjoy Jail.⁷⁵⁶ Casey's *Lament* lacked specifics about Ashe's death. However, his more polished poem *Thomas Ashe*, along with Maeve Cavanagh's poem by the same name, and *Brave Thomas Ashe*, by an unknown author all write of Ashe's death as a sacrifice that should be gratefully received and by a people who had failed to make that same gesture. O'Casey ends his poem stating

To your soul, for a while, we all murmur, Farewell!
And we take the Dear Gift that you gave,

⁷⁵⁴ On the handbills that circulated bearing his poetry and laments his name was given in its gaelic form, Sean O'Cathasaigh.

⁷⁵⁵ Examples of all of these works can be found in the Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

⁷⁵⁶ Christopher Murray, *Seán O'Casey, Writer at Work: A Biography* (Dublin, 2004), p. 104.

For your great Life stamped out in the cold prison cell
Shall be potent our own slavish nature to save,
Tho' your body we have in the drear hidden gloom of the grave.⁷⁵⁷

O'Casey's use of the word 'murmur' and 'slavish' imply that the Irish people meekly accepted the abuses of colonial rule, and consequently, should feel themselves ashamed when in the presence of a man who gave them the 'Gift' of his sacrifice. Maeve Cavanagh went still further in her poem *Thomas Ashe* writing with characteristic vitriol

And meekly from their ruffian hands
We took our thorn-crowned, crucified,
Not we, but he that lit the brands
And flung them far and wide.

We only made a pageant brave,
And laid a flag across his breast,
And knelt awhile beside his grave
And let the murdered rest.

Oh, had we loved him as we ought,
Not unavenged he would go;
Those guilty of his sinless blood
A people's wrath had stricken low.⁷⁵⁸

What these examples of poetry show is that advanced nationalist balladeers were keen to capitalise on and perpetuate the emotive energy generated by Ashe's death, inquest and funeral. However, they also call upon the reader or listener to reflect upon their own responsibility to Ireland. The clear narrative that came through in these poems was that Ireland was a colonised nation and the brutality of the British state should be resisted at *all* costs until Ireland was recognised as independent. An unwillingness to

⁷⁵⁷ *Thomas Ashe*, by Sean O'Casey in the Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

⁷⁵⁸ *Thomas Ashe*, by Maeve Cavanagh in *ibid*.

make the ultimate sacrifice to achieve this aim was thus criticised as weak and an act of disrespect to the memory of martyrs like Thomas Ashe.

The circulation of O'Casey's earlier *Lament* outside Mountjoy Jail has already been highlighted. However, it is important to consider the ways in which other ephemera memorialising Ashe was circulated and used *within* the funeral. Part of this analysis will also consider evidence of two other key examples of handbills to have circulated and their significance. The first was entitled *Inquest of Thos. Ashe. The Verdict of the Jury*, and the second, was entitled *Irish Bishop Speaks – the death of Thomas Ashe – The bishop of Killaloe's Protest*.⁷⁵⁹ These handbills and flyers were circulated to those lining the procession route.⁷⁶⁰ The latter, a reproduction of a letter by the Bishop of Killaloe, reinforced the demonstrations of support by the Catholic Church integrated into the funeral.

It is horrible that the country has to stand silently by listening to the moans of the decent young Irish boys who are being slowly done to death behind the walls of Mountjoy Prison by brutal tyrants; or to see them thrown in their last gasp to die like dogs outside the jail door.

They may die as poor Thomas Ashe has died, but with other results than Dublin Castle has dreamed of. Their deaths will sanctify them in the memory of Ireland and surround their heartless torturers with inextinguishable hatred and ignominy.⁷⁶¹

This flyer reiterates the nobility of Ashe's death and the sanctified place it afforded him within the nationalist cannon. Furthermore, it highlights the ignominy that many placed on the British government for the death of the hunger striker. Far from considering his removal to the Mater Hospital an

⁷⁵⁹ Mealy's auction house, 'Death of Thomas Ashe', lot no. 659, 28 April 2009 and 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

⁷⁶⁰ Elsie Mahaffy describes this happening in, 'Ireland in 1916: An Account of the Rising in Dublin, Illustrated with Printed Items and Photographs' by Elsie Mahaffy, MS 2074.

⁷⁶¹ Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

act of medical care, the flyer is keen to interpret it as a move made by the British government to avoid Ashe's death within the prison walls. The second of the handbills to pass around the assembled crowds along the procession route was an excerpt from the inquest jury's verdict. It highlighted, repeatedly, the culpability of the prison authorities for the death of Ashe and highlighted that the hunger strike had begun initially as a protest against their treatment by the authorities. In its most damning, and most oft quoted section of the verdict, the jury stated 'We find that the taking away of the deceased's bed, bedding, and boots was an unfeeling and a barbarous act, and we censure the Deputy-Governor for violating the prison rules and inflicting punishments which he had no power to do'.⁷⁶² This section was printed on the handbill in bold type drawing the eye naturally towards it.

Additionally, some individuals marching within the procession wore rudimentary badges consisting of 'a stick pin with a photo of the dead hunger-striker inserted centre and mounted on a piece of purple material with strands of black crepe and a bit of green ribbon attached at the top'.⁷⁶³ These items took the well-known and recognisable image of Ashe from a printed source and personalised them. By adding physical and emotional labour to the image to create a new object, the wearer was indicating to observers a greater and more profound bond between themselves and the dead hunger striker. Once again, the perpetual use of Ashe's image was

⁷⁶² Scrapbook of Robert Barton Vol. 1, MS 5637.

⁷⁶³ Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence', p. 149. Two examples of organisers rosettes remain at Kilmainham though without the photographs attached. See, Committee Members Badge from Funeral of Thomas Ashe 1917, 18BG/1C16/17, KGM and Steward's badge from Funeral of Thomas Ashe 1917, 18BG/1C16/18, KGM.

being used to reinforce the connection between those in the procession and the deceased republican in a hitherto unseen way. As in other funerals, such as that of O'Donovan Rossa, the implication to the bystander is that those marching in the procession were the heirs of the martyrs' mantle, however, in the instance of Thomas Ashe this was communicated by individuals physically wearing an element of the deceased, in this case their image, and therefore, in carrying this relic they mark themselves out not only as Ashe's heirs, but also, followers of a sanctified cause.

Thus, as the cortege passed the crowds they were struck, not only by a recognisable image of Ashe in life, but also the harrowing details of his last days, articulated, and condemned by the Church, a State instituted inquest, and a jury of Dublin citizens. And, finally, they were able to read Ashe's own poetry articulating his preparedness to die for the cause of Irish independence. The handbills that circulated through the spectators were a way of reconciling the two narratives of Ashe's death of, on the one hand, willing sacrifice, and, on the other, state murder so that the emotive impact of his passing remains could be appropriately interpreted.

As noted earlier, transportation from counties outside of Dublin was limited. Despite this, advanced nationalists, once again showing resolute understanding of the importance of technology to effective propaganda, ensured that film footage of the funeral was quickly, and widely, distributed. The Victoria Theatre in Galway, for example, showed scenes from the funeral on the 6 October, 1917.⁷⁶⁴ Those who were situated in Dublin however, did not have to wait as long to see the film footage that had been

⁷⁶⁴ Brophy, 'Political Funerals and the Realisation of Irish Independence', p. 165.

produced. Denis Condon's research shows that footage of Ashe's lying-in-state at the City Hall was shown at the Rotunda on the Saturday prior to the funeral, the intention being to release the footage on the funeral on the following Monday.⁷⁶⁵ However, on the night of the funeral itself the Bohemian cinema, which could seat 1,000 and was poignantly situated between Mountjoy Prison, where Ashe had been imprisoned, and Glasnevin Cemetery where he was interned, screened the completed footage.⁷⁶⁶

The *Limelight* report suggests that, having taken some light refreshment, mourners assembled at the Bohemian to reconstitute the political demonstration that the funeral represented. Here, they viewed the funeral distilled to its ten-minute highlights – twice the usual length of a newsreel – all taken from advantageous viewpoints. In a sense, the exhibition at the Bohemian represented the culmination of the political protest, of the concentration of the energies and emotions that had been built up over several days. That night spectators were freed from the limited perspective available to people in the crowd; they saw all the key events from a privileged vantage, an audience now seeing itself.⁷⁶⁷

Furthermore, republicans were benefiting from the commercially motivated use of the new technology of moving pictures that communicated the symbolic importance of the procession of Ashe's remains through the main thoroughfares of Dublin by armed and uniformed Volunteers. Additionally, by providing audiences with a *true* representation of events it allowed them to participate in the funeral despite temporal and geographical distance.

To conclude, the ephemera created to memorialise Thomas Ashe helped to sustain and advance a motif of blood sacrifice in the service of the Irish nation that had been maturing since the Easter Rising. The mass production of Ashe's final poem and a consistent image of the hunger striker

⁷⁶⁵ Condon, 'Politics and the Cinematograph', p. 142.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

served as modern relics that brought mourners into direct communion with the deceased. This quasi-religious and emotive connection was enhanced by film footage of the funeral that allowed mourners to situate themselves within a historic event. The distribution of handbills bearing the damning statements of both representatives of the Catholic Church, and the British state itself, circulated amongst spectators during the funeral that served to play on the emotive effect of the passing cortege to more fully incite rage against the brutalities of colonial rule. Finally, the laments and poems written by his fellow republicans urged spectators to recognise that the only way to truly mark their respect for Ashe's sacrifice was to follow his example.

Conclusion

The death of Thomas Ashe represented the largest public demonstration of militant republicanism on the streets of Dublin since the Easter Rising. It also marked the point at which men, recently returned from prisons and internment camps in England and Wales, reasserted control of the advanced nationalist movement, and in so doing, relegated the women that had sustained it in their absence. The unambiguous culpability of the British state in Ashe's death served to horrify even those of more moderate political persuasion and, as they came out to mourn him, provided republicans with a powerful propaganda platform. The funeral echoed earlier processions of dead leaders through the streets of Dublin, such as Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and Charles Stuart Parnell. However, the specific route taken by

Ashe's cortege drew together elements of the Dublin landscape that had traditionally been associated with advanced nationalism with sites linked to the more recent Rising and continuing protests by republicans. In addition to the body of the martyr, the organisers used modern technology to produce ephemera that acted as relics that they distributed amongst the vast audience to the funeral. In doing so, they were able to narrate a militant republican agenda that relied on a paradigm of blood sacrifice in the service of the Irish nation to defeat the brutalities of colonial rule.

Conclusion

The central theme of this thesis has been to come to some understanding of the means by which people's emotional attachment to abstract ideas of Irish identity changed, particularly between 1915 and 1917, and how those changes were communicated. In doing so it has drawn a number of conclusions. Succinctly put, it has argued for recognition of the role ephemera and performance played in shaping attitudes towards advanced nationalism amongst the wider Irish populace.

Among the most important contributions to knowledge presented in this thesis is its challenge to the prevailing attitude that ephemera and material culture have only a peripheral role to play in elucidating our understanding of increased popular support for advanced nationalism. Special emphasis is given to an analysis of how, and what types of, ephemeral material circulated in the aftermath of the Rising. In exploring this material it has been possible to demonstrate the ways in which what we consider to be ephemeral items facilitated a series of complex negotiations between individuals and the broader narrative discourse of the Rising. Particular examples include the Powell Press postcards where the cards individuals kept, how they ordered them and how they stored them give indications about which figureheads they most identified with. Or, to take another example, the souvenir publications that attempted to use text and images to give full accounts of the events of Easter Week and its immediate

aftermath. Despite these efforts at a complete narrative individuals annotated text expanding accounts, situating their own and challenging the interpretations contained within the publication.

Secondly, the thesis intervenes in the scholarship of the Rising, engaging particularly with studies that note the performative elements of the event. The purpose of this intervention is to assert that the significance of how the Rising was *seen* as an interactive performance by its audience during the specific timeframe of Easter Week itself is often overlooked. Consideration of the Rising's audience, or the temporal specificity of Easter Week is frequently snubbed in the existing literature in favour of a focus on the rebels themselves as performers, or the performative legacy of the Rising as witnessed in the various plays and commemorative events about 1916. Moreover, in order to understand the response of civilians to the Rising it is crucial to first appreciate that there was a contemporary understanding of the city as a stage upon which the political, social, and cultural identities of its inhabitants were routinely performed and interpreted.

Finally, this thesis argues for the central importance of the hunger strike, and funeral of Thomas Ashe in September 1917. The two events provide a clear indication of the degree to which public opinion had altered since the Rising. Irish Volunteers, a number of whom were recently returned from English prisons and camps, were able to stage a funeral for a veteran of Easter Week that was absolutely intelligible to its audience. The organisers of the funeral were able to clearly communicate, and elicit from the crowd, an emotive response to the circumstances surrounding Ashe's death, and

the increasing dominance of militant republicanism over the nationalist community, because they deployed an intricate marriage of ephemera, use of the city's spaces, and the bodies of both the hunger striker and those who processed his coffin to Glasnevin. Specifically, the proximity of the marchers to Ashe's coffin visually established a hierarchy for the watching crowds who were able to interpret the significance of Ashe's death through the ephemera they held and the visual significance of the route taken by the procession. All the while the body of Ashe served as a focal point throughout the proceedings and a metaphor for the treatment of Ireland by the British colonial power.

Existing works that have considered the performative elements of the Rising, and the role played by public funerals in expressing political sentiment, informs the research presented in this thesis. However, this thesis is unique in its approach to exploring the ways in which the communicative and performative strategies deployed by individuals to interpret and interact with events, such as the Rising and political funerals. This approach has combined an interrogation of interactive performative strategies, such as marching in processions or heckling in theatres, and the spaces in which they operate, with their relationships to material culture. First-hand accounts, such as diaries and witness statements, have been used to extrapolate the ways in which narrative political discourses were constructed, mediated, and altered, by both advanced nationalists and the communities in which they operated. The virtues of marrying these three approaches of performance, ephemera and witness testimony is that it makes it possible to begin to reinstate the intricacies of private and

individual mediation on landmark events, such as the Rising, into its wider interpretive narrative. Additionally, as in the case of Thomas Ashe's funeral, it has been possible to demonstrate that events had a more significant effect on public attitudes than has previously been accounted for.

Through its enquiry into the performative strategies that were deployed to articulate political identity prior to the Rising this thesis presents two key arguments. Firstly, that the significance attributed to Irish modernism and the role of the Abbey Theatre has occluded the possibility of explorations into the more protean ways in which Dubliners experienced nationalism during the *fin de siècle*. This thesis has sought to rectify the historiographical lacunae by illustrating the ways advanced nationalists operated within the broader milieux of entertainment and political spectacle. Most prominently, consideration has been given to widely held anxieties surrounding performances of gender, and the public responses to the Boer War that illustrate the ways advanced nationalists situated their responses to each in a language that was intelligible within contemporary discourse. This research also has established that the significance of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in 1915 has, in previous studies, been only narrowly understood. To date, focus has remained on the importance of Patrick Pearse's graveside oration. The speech is understood as the moment that advanced nationalists openly declared an agenda of armed insurrection. The fulfilment of that promise within a year has meant that O'Donovan Rossa's funeral has been approached as merely a prelude to the Easter Rising. However, such observations have obscured other ways in which O'Donovan Rossa's funeral was recognised, in 1915, as a landmark event. I

have argued in chapter one that it is necessary to interpret O'Donovan Rossa's funeral as a moment in which advanced nationalists performed both their unity and their increasing militarism to an audience of civilians. Moreover, the choreography of the funeral and the way in which it used the cityscape to demonstrate a defiance of the British authorities was a significant moment in the evolution of advanced nationalist politics that would later be mirrored and developed in the funeral of Thomas Ashe. In focusing too heavily upon the panegyric of Pearse one risks limiting the significance of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral solely to the events that took place at his graveside and consequently, to the comparatively small number of individuals from the advanced nationalist community who were granted proximity to the burial site. Such an approach fails to sufficiently take into account the effect of the six days of public mourning for O'Donovan Rossa where thousands of individuals went to pay their respects in City Hall. Nor does it cater for the relationship between the highly choreographed procession of O'Donovan Rossa's body through the streets of Dublin and the success of the organisers in communicating the funeral as an event that held national significance, led by a militarised body of advanced nationalists.

This growing militancy, a general feature of the period, and its organisation by individuals like Sean MacDermott and James Connolly ultimately led to armed insurrection in April, 1916. This thesis has supported the consensus of opinion that the Rising failed to garner popular support. The majority of studies available note the confusion caused by the countermanding order, an attempt at mobilisation at short notice on a bank holiday, and the rumours that circulated in the absence of reliable

information. However, this thesis differs in arguing that this confusion was an endemic feature of the Rising as a performance. As a performance it represented a moment of rupture from the conventions that had preceded it as it did not facilitate an interactive response from its audience and relied heavily on the use of internal spaces that obscured elements of the rebels' performance from the view of spectators altogether. The second chapter of this thesis was dedicated to a thorough exploration of the precise ways in which advanced nationalists failed to communicate successfully to their audience, and concomitantly, their audience failed to successfully interpret the rebel's performance. It observed that the Proclamation explicitly constituted the rebels as the army of an independent Irish Republic. Consequently, the rebels were required to act, uniformly, on behalf of the nation. Previously, the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army, and to some extent, Cumann na mBan were a citizen militia who claimed to act only on behalf of advanced nationalists. Thus, discrepancies between the rebels' individual identity performances and the roles required of them as members of a body politic in the newly constituted republic rendered the Rising illegible to its audience. The clearest example of this was in the experiences of women. The Proclamation had explicitly emancipated women and recognised them as equal to men in the rights of citizenship. Many interpreted this to mean that women had an equal right, not only to participate in the Rising, but also to take up frontline combatant roles. However, in so doing they destabilised the ideological constructions of republican gender performance that required men to take up arms and for women to take on a passive roles of care and reproduction. Additionally, the

spaces, such as the streets, theatres, and municipal areas like St. Stephen's Green, that constituted the stages for performed identity prior to the Rising had always been contested grounds with multiple, often competing performances. As was the case, for example, during Queen Victoria's Royal Visit of April, 1900 where unionists and advanced nationalists vied with one another in their use of space to show their allegiance or insubordination respectively. However, for the Rising to be intelligible it was necessary for it to be the only performance. Therefore the looting caused significant problems for the rebels as it became understood to be a part of the Rising itself rather than a competing use of space that took advantage of the breakdown of law and order. Despite the confusion, civilians initially persevered and attempted to make sense of the Rising by taking to the streets and engaging with the combatants in a style that had typified participation in political performances prior to the Rising. However, as the week wore on non-combatants increasingly retreated to the relative safety of internal spaces thus making spectatorship impossible and removing the rebels' principle audience.

Given the failure of the Rising to garner popular support and the levels of trauma and horror expressed at the destruction of the city, it seems incredible that there should have been such overwhelming electoral success for Sinn Féin by the end of 1917. However, this thesis has shown that in the aftermath of the Rising narratives were created that made sense of the events. Moreover, material culture formed the central mechanism for achieving this. The demand for souvenirs of the Rising was immediate and civilians wasted no time in taking to the streets to procure them. Both

advanced nationalists and commercially interested parties soon caught up with this demand and began producing ephemera that narrated, and shaped, the events of Easter Week to an eager audience. Prominent examples included illustrated souvenir publications that combined text and images and were marketed as authoritative and complete accounts of the Rising. These publications not only provided information about how the fighting itself unfolded but also, images of the destruction left in its wake, human interest stories and biographic details of the principal individuals from the Rising, in particular those executed for their part in the fighting. Postcards were also circulated in large numbers. Their subject matter tended to be either portraits of prominent rebels or scenes from the city during, and immediately after the Rising. The presentation of factual information and subjective statements on these pieces of mass-produced ephemera began to frame the Rising through motifs of blood sacrifice wherein the rebels had bravely, but misguidedly, taken on the Goliath of the British state with inevitable consequences. This thesis shows that mass-produced ephemera was not passively consumed. Scrapbooks are one of many examples of ways that the individuals who collected ephemera modified items and made choices about how they were displayed. These processes of selecting, ordering, etc., demonstrate that individuals sought and created a more personalised engagement with how they constructed interpretive discourses of the Rising. In addition to the alteration of mass-produced commemorative articles many people sought out more unique items connected to the Rising and the rebels. I have argued through the course of this research that these items, whether they were taken from the city's

smouldering rubble or procured through the female relatives of absent or deceased rebels, constituted relics. The possession of these items facilitated a proximate relationship to the Rising and thus, a claim to an authentic experience from which to articulate an interpretation of its events.

Whilst the rebels, and other members of the advanced nationalist community languished in English prisons and internment camps, it fell to those who remained to engage with the emerging narratives of the Rising and to attempt to exert control over them. This was made particularly challenging as the British authorities were determined to diminish the spaces available to advanced nationalists to propagate their cause. Their marches were banned, their meetings prevented and much of the ephemera they produced in the Rising's aftermath was declared seditious and impounded. Notwithstanding all of this, one of the spaces that remained available was the church. It was in these buildings and their surrounding areas that the predominantly female relatives of the rebels were able to affect public discourses of the Rising. A key way in which this was achieved was in the production and circulation of memorial cards, to accompany the memorial Masses for the executed leaders. The cards contained openly seditious narratives that situated the Rising with a longer teleology of revolt against British rule. They could be read within the confines of the Church whilst the individual listened to the Mass. The visceral effect of the religious service and the heightened emotive impact of the individuals proximity to the bereaved families worked to reinforce the narrative the cards told. A key feature of the relics produced following the Rising was that they focused on absence, either of buildings that had once stood in the city, or of the men

interned in England, or finally, of the executed leaders whose bodies remained in the possession of the British authorities. Relics were also a significant feature in the response to Thomas Ashe's death. However, as the final chapter of this thesis explained, there were notable differences in the way these material objects functioned. Here the demand for relics was pre-empted by the organisers of Ashe's funeral and consequently, they were able to cater for it whilst also maintaining a tight control over the way in which Ashe's protest and subsequent death was narrated to the public. The relics under discussion in the case of Thomas Ashe were not unique. Indeed, the handbills and memorial cards bearing his image and last poem, which I argue constituted relics, were mass-produced and widely distributed through the crowds that lined the streets to watch his coffin pass them. However, these items functioned as relics precisely because of the relationship between the hunger strikers image, the declaration of willing self-sacrifice contained within his final poem, and the passing hearse. Ultimately, the funeral of Thomas Ashe was the moment when armed Volunteers took to the streets of Dublin in the largest political display since the Rising. The funeral echoed that of O'Donovan Rossa two years prior. This funeral however, developed the nationalist topography of Ireland more strongly to integrate landmarks associated with the Rising thus situating it firmly within an intelligible political narrative. The public performance of mourning for Ashe made complete sense to its audience. In part, this was because it modelled itself on previous examples of political display. However, it was also because the organisers understood entirely the power of ephemera and used it, in tandem with the individual's proximity to Ashe's

body, and the strategic use of space within the city to interact emotively and politically with the audience.

By way of a final and concluding statement I return to the mention made in the introduction of the display case at Kilmainham Gaol Museum containing the scapular removed from Michael Collins' dead body. The display cases also contain more deeply personal effects such as a letter of proposal written by Joseph Plunkett to Grace Gifford in 1915. However, these unique pieces are supplemented by mass-produced images of the executed leaders of the 1916 Rising, mortuary cards, and other such ephemera. Each item has been chosen careful to narrate a deeply evocative and personal story of the actions, and crucially, sacrifices that led to Irish independence. Similarly, each item is placed to evoke a thoughtful and engaged response to that history in the viewer. In short, these items are not passive and, just as they did when they originally circulated they are still communicating narratives and facilitating a process wherein the individual situates themselves within story. However, museums choose to display the mass-produced ephemera that they deem to be in pristine condition or that have been donated by individuals, or the decedents of individuals, who were prominent in the independence movement. Consequently, the voices of the ordinary men and women who scribbled out words, annotated margins and situated items alongside others in scrapbooks are lost. Historians have an opportunity and a responsibility to recognise the value of these seemingly inconsequential modifications for what they can tell us about the evolution of identification with advanced nationalist identity, and resituate them back into the narrative of Irish independence.

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