

‘RIDDING OURSELVES OF THE PAST’:  
TRAUMA, TESTIMONY AND THE IRISH CIVIL  
WAR

Tráchtas a leagadh isteach chun riachtanas na céime dochtúireachta a  
chomhlíonadh

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## **Dearbhú**

Dearbhaím gurb é mo shaothar féin atá sa tráchtas dochtúireachta seo agus nach bhfuil céim faighte agam in Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh, ná in ollscoil ar bith eile atá bunaithe ar aon chuid den saothar seo.

Síobhra Aiken  
23 Meán Fómhair 2020

*i ndilchuimhne na mban misniúil romham  
a chuir síolta na réabhlóide –  
ach nár bhain a fómhar*

*Nano Aiken (1896–1972)  
Nellie Stuart (1898–1985)  
Maudie Davin (1898–1978)  
Annie Cardwell (1904–1922)*



## Abstract

This dissertation complicates the widespread scholarly and popular belief that the Irish Civil War (1922–1923) was followed by a ‘traumatic silence’. It achieves this by opening up an alternative archive of published civil war testimony. Most of the testimonies included were produced in the 1920s and 1930s. They were written by pro- and anti-treaty men and women, in both English and Irish. Nearly all have eluded sustained scholarly attention to date. The wealth of this body of testimony suggests that the supposed ‘silence’ of the Irish Civil War was less related to an inability to speak on the part of revolutionaries, but rather due to an unwillingness by the architects of official memory to receive and invest in the testimony of civil war veterans. However, testimonies of traumatic events seldom appear in conventional form. The act of smuggling private, painful experience into the public realm, especially when it challenged official memory making (or even forgetting), demanded the cautious deployment of self-protective narrative strategies. As a result, this dissertation calls for the broader incorporation of less conventional, fictionalised and hybridised forms of life writing into historical study.

This rich archive of testimony facilitated a counter-memory to the dominant commitment to ‘forget’ the civil war. These testimonies also illustrate the interface between the cultural mediation of the ‘collective trauma’ of the Irish Civil War and emerging understandings of individual psychic ‘trauma’ in the early decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, a number of veterans self-consciously engaged in projects of therapeutic writing as a means to ‘heal’ the ‘spiritual wounds’ of civil war. This dissertation argues that fictionalised forms of life writing were widely employed to grapple with the psychological complexities of veterans’ wartime experience – this is particularly evident in the case of female revolutionaries. The dissertation also outlines the prevalence of literary representations of wartime sexual violence, challenging the assumptions that sexual violence during the Irish revolution was ‘rare’ or ‘hidden’. It further considers overlooked perpetrator trauma narratives that emerged in the 1970s in the context of the ‘Troubles’, and outlines the particular exculpatory narrative strategies adopted by veterans to enable their confessions of perpetrating violence.

## Nóta Buíochais

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*Síobhra Aiken*

*22 Meán Fómhair 2020*

Mo bhuíochas freisin leis an Ollamh Guy Beiner as a chuid tacaíochta agus comhairle.

*This dissertation was produced during the covid-19 pandemic; as a result, there are occasional page numbers missing which could not be located at this time.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### INEFFABLE TRAUMA?: LOOKING BEYOND THE SILENCE OF THE IRISH CIVIL WAR

Veterans of the Irish revolution widely expressed their view that the Irish Civil War (1922–23) was particularly devastating: Síghle Humphreys lamented that there was nothing ‘chomh holic le Cogadh na gCarad’<sup>1</sup>; for Mary Harpur it was the ‘tragedy of all tragedies’<sup>2</sup>; Frank O’Connor wrote that ‘the period from the end of 1922 to the spring of 1923 was one that I found almost unbearably painful’.<sup>3</sup> This sense of disillusion is generally considered to have left a traumatic silence in its wake, as this short, yet violent, intra-nationalist conflict was ‘such a painful memory that many preferred to forget it altogether’.<sup>4</sup> Even though the conflict became a fault line of future Irish politics, politicians and public figures repressed personal stories and burnt their civil war papers.<sup>5</sup> School textbooks, memoirs and autobiographies mysteriously ended with the truce in July 1921. This ‘conspiracy of silence’ is particularly discernible in the ‘postmemory’ of a second generation, descendants of those veterans, many of whom would agree that ‘the whole country seemed to have taken a vow of silence’.<sup>6</sup> Historians also refer to the civil war as the ‘great silence upon which Irish national identity was constructed’, concurring that ‘silence was the preferred option of many’ and that ‘a veil of silence was drawn

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<sup>1</sup> ‘There is nothing as bad as civil war’. Síghle Humphreys faoi agallamh ag Helen Ní Shé, 22 March 1987, Glórtha na Réabhlóide, RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltacha. Available at: <http://140.203.202.64/items/show/725> (Accessed 11 June 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Mary O’Connor (née Harpur), Unpublished memoir, p. 29. Mo bhuíochas le Cairtriona Nic Mhuiris a thug cóip dom de na cuimhní cinn seo. An active member of Cumann na mBan, Mary Harpur remained in contact throughout the civil war with her future husband, Seán O’Connor, who was later attached to the First Battalion of the Irish speaking unit of the Free State Army.

<sup>3</sup> Frank O’Connor, *An Only Child* (Macmillan & Company, 1961 [1971]), p. 239.

<sup>4</sup> John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin: The Fight for the Irish Capital, 1922–1924* (Merrion Press, 2017), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Eunan O’Halpin, ‘Personal Loss and the ‘Trauma of Internal War’: The Cases of W. T. Cosgrave and Seán Lemass’, in Melania Terrazas Gallego (ed.), *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Peter Lang, 2020), pp 159–181.

<sup>6</sup> This quote is taken from a participant in an oral history project led by Gavin Foster. See Foster, ‘Local and Family Memory of the Irish Civil War’, Queen’s University Belfast, 12 June 2017. Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/history-hub/gavin-foster-local-family-memory-irish-civil-war> (Accessed 11 June 2019). Foster employs Marianne Hirsch’s term ‘postmemory’ which she coined to describe ‘the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to constitute memories in their own right’. For a critique of the concept of ‘postmemory’ – given it proposes too sharp a distinction between biographical memory and intergenerational memory that is not sensitive to the premediations and renegotiations through which memory is processed – see Guy Beiner, ‘Probing the Boundaries of Irish Memory: From Postmemory to Prememory and Back’, *Irish Historical Studies* 39, no. 154 (November 2014), pp 296–307.

over much of the violence'.<sup>7</sup> Literary scholars hold that the events were 'all failures too bitter for speech'<sup>8</sup>, and that most writers 'preferred to remain silent on the civil war'.<sup>9</sup> Almost one hundred years on, the 'traumatic memory of this period' is still perceived to be 'too strong – or politically divisive – for it to be memorialized'.<sup>10</sup> The official state decade of centenaries programme even omitted the latter half of the conflict in its original schedule of events for 2012–2022.<sup>11</sup>

This rhetoric of ineffability or inexpressibility often emerges in scholarship on catastrophic events, such as the Holocaust and the Irish Famine. For Guy Beiner, these perceived prolonged silences are 'indicative of the popular appeal of quasi-psychoanalytical models in which a traumatic event is considered, by definition, to be unspeakable until it resurfaces at a much later date'.<sup>12</sup> However, as Mirianne Hirsch and others caution, such 'a hyperbolic emphasis on trauma and the breakdown of speech' risks 'occluding the wealth of knowledge'.<sup>13</sup> Even if trauma is considered to be an 'unclaimed experience' that resists linguistic representation,<sup>14</sup> it is paradoxically a highly generative process. As Roger Luckhurst sums up, trauma, in 'its shock impact is anti-narrative, but it also generates the manic production of retrospective narratives that seek to explicate the trauma'.<sup>15</sup> Whereas Anne Dolan, in her influential study *Commemorating the Irish Civil War* (2003), asks whether 'civil war, by its very nature, demands silence?', more recent studies of civil conflict suggest otherwise.<sup>16</sup> The essays in Deslandes et al.'s volume *Civil War and Narrative: Testimony, Historiography, Memory* (2017) indicate that civil wars, more so than other conflicts, actually produce an abundance of narrative, as 'amidst collective amnesia, public censorship and the

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<sup>7</sup> Begoña Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 15; Peter Cottrell, *The War for Ireland: 1913–1923* (Osprey, 2009), p. 227; Diarmaid Ferriter, 'Irish Civil War Has Its Own Contentious Monuments', *The Irish Times*, 26 August 2017; Fearghal McGarry, 'Revolution, 1916–1923', in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland: Volume 4: 1880 to the Present*, vol. 4 (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 292.

<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State: 1922–1939* (Penn State Press, 2010), p. 331.

<sup>10</sup> Emilie Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Springer, 2010), p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Hanley, 'Foreword' in John Dorney, *The Civil War in Dublin* (Merrion Press, 2017), p. xi.

<sup>12</sup> Guy Beiner, 'Memory Too Has a History', *Dublin Review of Books*, 1 March 2015. Available at: <https://www.drbr.ie/essays/memory-too-has-a-history> (Accessed 9 February 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Mirianne Hirsch, 'The Witness in the Archive: Holocaust Studies/Memory Studies' in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (Fordham Univ Press, 2010), p. 391. See also Naomi Mandel, *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (University of Virginia Press, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> See Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Routledge, 2013), p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923–2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 4.

maddening proliferation of competing versions, the task of fashioning historical narratives becomes all the [more] urgent as it is contentious.<sup>17</sup> IRA leader Seán Moylan begrudgingly observed in 1921 that '[w]e started the war with hurleys and, by God, we'll finish it with fountain-pens'.<sup>18</sup> His comments rang true: the two decades following the civil war ushered in what Frances Flanagan describes as a 'highly competitive' commemorative culture, as numerous revolutionaries traded in their weapons for pens.<sup>19</sup>

This dissertation challenges the widespread belief that the Irish Civil War was shrouded by a trauma-induced 'popular amnesia'.<sup>20</sup> It achieves this by opening up an alternative archive of published testimonies to the conflict. These testimonies were written by pro- and anti-treaty men and women, in both English and Irish. Nearly all have eluded sustained scholarly attention. The wealth of this body of testimonies suggests, therefore, that 'silence' was not merely a problem of language for participants, but rather the result of an unwillingness by official memory-makers to receive and invest in their stories. Moreover, testimonies to traumatic events seldom appear in conventional form. The act of smuggling private, often painful experience, into the public realm, especially when it challenged official memory making (or even forgetting), demanded a cautious deployment of self-protective narrative strategies. Testimonies of the civil war can thus often be found in narratives that rely on generic dissonance; in seemingly artless fictionalised life writing, in semi-autobiographical fiction and drama, buried under the artifice of poetry or in gothic and romance modes. The supposed dearth of published first-hand testimonies relating to the civil war is especially complicated by the proliferation of popular autofictional testimonies; these are listed in the bibliography and call for a broader incorporation of popular and literary narratives into historical study.

For Kalí Tal, 'literature of trauma is written from the need to tell and retell the story of the traumatic experience, to make it 'real' both to the victim and to the community'.<sup>21</sup> Aside from unearthing this disparate body of subjective historical evidence, this dissertation will

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<sup>17</sup> E. Adamia, 'The Truth of Fiction: Some Stories of the Lebanese Civil War' in Karine Deslandes, Fabrice Mourlon, and Bruno Tribout (eds), *Civil War and Narrative: Testimony, Historiography, Memory* (Springer, 2017), p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Mercier, 2013), p. 408; Mossie Hartnett, *Victory and Woe* (UCD Press, 2002), p. 115.

<sup>19</sup> Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 9. Desmond Ryan's private assertion that 'I am a knight of the pen, better fitted to wield it than guns, pikes or grenades' mirrors Peadar O'Donnell's now famous comment to his publisher in 1933 that 'My pen is just a weapon'.

<sup>20</sup> John Regan, cited in Raita Merivirta 'Brother against Brother, Green against Green: The Irish Civil War on the Screen', in Isabelle Le Corff and Estelle Epinoux (eds), *Cinemas of Ireland* (Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2009), p. 158.

<sup>21</sup> Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 21.

explore the implications of the act of bearing witness in the aftermath of internecine war for both personal emotional release and for promoting social reconciliation. Even though testimony is personal and subjective, it is also inherently ‘collective’, and ‘highly politicized’, especially when attempting to voice a silenced story of trauma that threatens the status quo.<sup>22</sup> This study will therefore address the interface between individual experience of trauma and wider cultural understandings of the civil war as a particularly traumatic event. Moreover, as testimony is fundamentally dialogic, the interactions of readerships with such testimonies in the shadow of official reticence will be considered throughout. Such interactions not only shed light on the public validation of private stories on which ‘testimonial resolution’ relies,<sup>23</sup> the circulation and reading of these testimonies also generated (counter)social memory which contested the ‘bogus amnesia’ promoted in official commemorations – to use President Michael D. Higgin’s term.<sup>24</sup>

Before considering the testimonies of individuals, it is necessary in this introductory chapter to consider why the civil war is generally perceived as a particularly traumatic event in Irish history and trace the construction of the Irish Civil War as a type of ‘cultural trauma’. Such trauma occurs, according to Jeffrey Alexander, ‘when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways’.<sup>25</sup> The following section of this chapter will consider how this narrative of cultural trauma related to contemporary understandings of individual psychic trauma. The employment of the term ‘trauma’ in the context of the Irish Civil War is problematic given that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was not medically defined until 1980. The concept of ‘trauma’, therefore, must be comprehensively historicised and understood in its medical, political, social and cultural context in the early years of the Irish Free State. The final section of this chapter will outline the emergence of ‘testimony’ in the aftermath of the civil war and will illustrate the literary and intertextual motifs on which civil war narratives rely.

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<sup>22</sup> Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (BasicBooks, 1992), p. 181; Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (Taylor and Francis, 1992), p. xvii.

<sup>24</sup> Ronan McGreevy, “‘Viciousness’ of Irish Civil War Should Be Examined – President”, *Irish Times*, 9 October 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, ‘Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma’, in Jeffrey Alexander et al. (eds), *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (University of California Press, 2004), p. 1.

## The Cultural Trauma of Civil War

From as far back as the Roman Civil War, civil war has been universally perceived as ‘uniquely traumatic’ owing, firstly to the material devastation inflicted on the population, and secondly, due to its seemingly endless legacy.<sup>26</sup> Yet, while the Irish Civil War has been considered ‘one of the most tragic and traumatic events in the history of the country’s nationalist struggle’, Gavin Foster contends that there have been few attempts to tease out the conflict’s ‘fraught legacy’.<sup>27</sup> In the strictest of historical terms, Ireland’s civil war erupted over the acceptance of the Anglo-Irish treaty in December 1921 and was fought from June 1922 until May 1923 between the provisional government pro-treaty forces and the anti-treaty IRA, who objected to the oath to allegiance to a British monarch and to partition. The conflict began with the provisional government’s decision, in response to an ultimatum delivered by the British government, to shell the anti-treaty IRA garrison in Dublin’s Four Courts. The anti-treaty IRA were quickly defeated in the capital, although fighting continued across the country. The provisional government had widespread popular support and benefited from superior firepower and financial resources, which enabled them to recruit demobilised British army soldiers and unemployed workers into its national army, whose ranks swelled to 50,000. The anti-treaty side were on the defensive for the remainder of the war. They waged local guerrilla campaigns, which varied in intensity from county to county, before ultimately declaring a ceasefire on 24 April 1923, demoralised by reprisal executions, their excommunication from the Catholic Church and waning public support.

Despite the brevity of the conflict at the moment of state formation, the loss of life was perhaps higher than that of the earlier revolutionary period. Eunan O’Halpin suggests that the civil war incurred perhaps 2,000 deaths, many of whom were combatants rather than civilians; this supersedes the estimated 1,800 deaths from 1919 to 1921, almost half of whom were civilians.<sup>28</sup> As research by Gemma Clark outlines, ‘everyday violence’ was a feature of life throughout the period, in the form of intimidation, arson, and assault.<sup>29</sup> Atrocities were committed by both sides. Anti-treaty forces engaged in an assassination campaign against pro-

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<sup>26</sup> Nicholas McDowell, ‘Civil Wars of Words: From Classical Rome to the Northern Ireland Troubles’, *Global Intellectual History* 4, no. 3 (September 2019), p. 298, David Armitage, ‘Civil Wars, from Beginning .. to End?’, *American Historical Review* 120 (5), 2015, pp 1829–37.

<sup>27</sup> Gavin Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class, and Conflict* (Springer, 2015), p. 226.

<sup>28</sup> O’Halpin, ‘Personal Loss and the ‘Trauma of Internal War’, p. 169.

<sup>29</sup> See Gemma Clark, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

treaty TDs, carried out hit-and-run ambushes, were responsible for the burning down of numerous 'Big Houses', planted concealed explosive mines and caused widespread damage to railways, roads and other infrastructure. The Free State responded with a repressive policy of state-sanctioned violence: 83 republican prisoners were executed after trial by military court,<sup>30</sup> while over 12,000 anti-treaty men and over 600 women were interned until as late as spring 1924.<sup>31</sup> This far exceeded the rates of execution and imprisonment under the British from 1916 to 1921. The new state was also implicated in some 150 extrajudicial killings of anti-treaty prisoners and unarmed activists.<sup>32</sup> The last month of fighting – popularly referred to as 'the terror month' – witnessed a number of brutal atrocities, including an incident in Ballyseedy Wood, Co. Kerry, where nine republican prisoners were tied to a mine before it was blown up.

The legacy of the civil war is widely associated with intense 'bitterness'. While some historians question the extent of such sentiment and suggest its exploitation for political purposes,<sup>33</sup> Dolan contends that, '[w]ithout taking full account of bitterness it is questionable whether one can begin to understand the Irish Civil War at all'.<sup>34</sup> Aside from atrocities and loss of life, this bitterness is often tied to the impact of the civil war on what was a tightly-knit revolutionary movement.<sup>35</sup> Many of the leaders of the 1916 Rising and war of independence lost their lives in the civil war, while former comrades found themselves on opposing sides. Others attempted desperately to prevent the conflict or participated only reluctantly. The civil war also had broader social ramifications, as many families, friends, colleagues, and even spouses, found themselves split over the terms of the treaty. Kathleen Napoli McKenna is one of many to address the social and political alienation which continued long after the conflict; when she found herself sharing a railway carriage with her former colleague, Anna Kelly, neither of them dared 'speak for fear of a rebuff'.<sup>36</sup> The war too precipitated a period of economic instability. Many former revolutionaries, particularly anti-treaty republicans,

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<sup>30</sup> See Seán Enright, *The Irish Civil War: Law, Execution and Atrocity* (Merrion Press, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> While Cal McCarthy suggests at least 681 anti-treaty women were imprisoned, this does not include female revolutionaries who were interned North of the emerging border. Eoin Magennis' and Lesa Ní Mhumbaile's ongoing research documents the experience of female internees in Armagh gaol.

<sup>32</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Joe Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 69.

<sup>34</sup> Anne Dolan, 'Review of *The Politics of the Irish Civil War*', *Reviews in History* (review no. 502), March 2006. Available at: <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/502> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>35</sup> Fearghal McGarry, 'Revolution, 1916–1923', in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland: Volume 4, 1880 to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 291.

<sup>36</sup> Patrick Maume, 'Kathleen Napoli McKenna', *Dictionary for Irish Biography*; Kathleen McKenna, *A Dáil Girl's Revolutionary Recollections* (Original Writing Limited, 2014).

struggled to secure employment in its aftermath and thousands emigrated in the years that followed.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the acceptance of the ‘conspiracy of silence’ and ‘legacy of bitterness’ of the civil war, the conflict remains under-theorised. Academic studies of the Irish revolution often ended with the truce in 1921, preferring to leave the civil war ‘to another student of Chaos’.<sup>38</sup> Michael Hopkinson’s *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (1988) was the first scholarly study of the conflict, following Eoin Neeson’s and Calton Younger’s popular accounts published in 1966 and 1968 respectively.<sup>39</sup> As Foster and Bill Kissane illustrate, many subsequent studies of the civil war tended to focus on high politics, privileging the military dimensions of the conflict and sidestepping social and gender concerns. The split is often presented as a personal Manichean conflict between pro-treaty leader Michael Collins and anti-treaty leader Éamon de Valera based on simplified democrat/dictator binaries.<sup>40</sup>

Academic studies also tend to downplay the traumatic legacy popularly associated with the civil war. This may be attributed to the positivist impulse underlying Irish revisionism, as a result of which, Joseph Valente contends, the ‘deployment of trauma theory in Irish studies’ is associated with an ‘embattled nationalist position against revisionism’.<sup>41</sup> A number of comparative studies highlight the limited violence and death toll of the civil war in contrast to contemporaneous European conflicts, such as the Finnish Civil War (1918) and the Silesian Civil Wars (1919–1921).<sup>42</sup> While such studies certainly offer valuable insights, they can easily be employed to support Liam Kennedy’s ‘MOPE’ leitmotif, influenced by debates of false memory syndrome, according to which the Irish naively view themselves as the ‘most

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<sup>37</sup> See Gavin Wilk, *Transatlantic Defiance: The Militant Irish Republican Movement in America, 1923–45* (Manchester University Press, 2014); Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*.

<sup>38</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Politics and Irish Life 1913–1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Gill and Macmillan, 1977), p. 231.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Gill and Macmillan, 1988); Eoin Neeson, *The Civil War in Ireland* (Mercier Press, 1966); Calton Younger, *Ireland’s Civil War* (Muller, 1968).

<sup>40</sup> See Gavin Foster, ‘In the Shadow of the Split: Writing the Irish Civil War’, *Field Day Review* 2 (2006), pp 294–303; Bill Kissane, ‘Historians and the Civil War’, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp 202–230.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Valente, ‘Ethnostalgia: Irish Hunger and Traumatic Memory’ in Oona Frawley (ed.), *Memory Ireland: Volume 3: The Famine and the Troubles* (Syracuse University Press, 2014), p. 177.

<sup>42</sup> As many historians note, the levels of violence and executions during the Finnish Civil War of 1918 far exceed that of the Irish Civil War. See Lee, *Ireland, 1912–1985*, p. 69; Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2005); Bill Kissane, ‘Victory in defeat?: national identity after civil war in Finland and Ireland’ in John A. Hall and Siniša Malešević (eds), *Nationalism and war* (Cambridge, 2013), pp 321–40; Clark, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War*, p. 3. See also the comparative study K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918–1922* (Oxford, 2010).

oppressed people ever'.<sup>43</sup> For example, Dolan suggests that the relatively low levels of violence and homicide rates are worth considering 'when tempted [...] to give into our *Angela's Ashes*-type instincts; that worse than the ordinary miserable civil war is the miserable Irish civil war'.<sup>44</sup>

The emphasis on levels of violence, however, fails to consider event and its meaning as separate. Cathy Caruth, in her reading of Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, contends that 'trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on'.<sup>45</sup> While Caruth's concern is individual psychic trauma, sociologists have developed theories of 'collective trauma' and 'cultural trauma' to grapple with the ways in which people harness the language of trauma to describe events that affect both individuals and collective groups. Arthur G. Neal considers an event to be a 'collective trauma' when it appears 'to threaten or seriously invalidate our usual assessments of social reality'.<sup>46</sup> Sociologists Alexander and Ron Eyerman emphasise how such 'collective' or 'historical traumas' are culturally mediated 'through various forms of representation'.<sup>47</sup> As Alexander explains in his theorization of 'cultural trauma':

[E]vents do not in and of themselves create collective trauma. Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution. The attribution may be made in real time, as an event unfolds; it may also be made before the event occurs, as an adumbration, or after the event has concluded.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, diaries and letters written during the civil war suggest that the conflict was instantaneously coded as traumatic, including by those with little or no direct interaction with

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<sup>43</sup> Liam Kennedy, *Unhappy the Land: The Most Oppressed People Ever, the Irish?* (Irish Academic Press, 2015); Guy Beiner, 'Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland', *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007), p. 369.

<sup>44</sup> Anne Dolan, 'Writing the History of the Irish Civil War', UCD College of Arts and Humanities, 12 October 2018, 12:45. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6164yPQj3w> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century* (M.E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ron Eyerman, 'Formation of African American Identity', in Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (eds), *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (University of California Press, 2004), p. 76.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander, 'Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma', p. 8. Opponents of the concept of 'cultural trauma', such as Wulf Kansteiner, warn of the danger of conflating individual trauma with public trauma. See Wulf Kansteiner, 'Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural Trauma Metaphor', *Rethinking History* 8, no. 2 (1 June 2004), pp 193–221. Nevertheless, the concept is helpful to explore the widely observed legacy of traumatic silence following the civil war.

its violence.<sup>49</sup> However, the civil war was also narrativised as traumatic *avant la lettre*. An editorial in the *Freeman's Journal* in May 1922 lamented the split caused over the terms of the treaty, noting '[d]o cuireadh deireadh le coga na gcarad [...] Beidh iarsmaí an chogaidh sin ar an dtír go ceann tamaill, ámhthach. Coga carad caoi namhad'.<sup>50</sup> A report in *The Kilkenny People* further lamented in April 1922 that '[c]ivil war means death and destruction. It means the material ruin of the nation and the moral degradation of its people'.<sup>51</sup> These editorials were both printed before fighting officially erupted in June 1922 and illustrate the 'affective prememory' of civil war. As Beiner explains, historical events are 'invariably understood and remembered in their time through reference to memories of previous events'.<sup>52</sup> David Armitage, author of *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas*, posits that such a dynamic is key to understanding civil war; it is 'both a historical and cumulative concept: that is, that whenever the spectre of civil war arose, it did so in forms that recalled previous conflicts'.<sup>53</sup>

The idea of the civil war as particularly traumatic was often set up as a contrast to the more heroic, glorified narrative of the period 1916–1921. In his introduction to Dan Breen's 1924 memoir, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, Joseph McGarrity juxtaposed the 'physical suffering' of Breen during the war of independence with the 'mental torture' 'he must have endured later on seeing his former comrades turn their arms against each other after the signing of the treaty in 1921'.<sup>54</sup> The civil war has thus been imagined as almost exclusively traumatic to the extent that traumas associated with other events during the Irish revolution have been downplayed. A recent psychiatric study has even attempted to gauge the effect of the Irish Civil War on suicide rates through an analysis of the registrar-general's archives for 1922 and 1923.<sup>55</sup> Such an understanding risks following a 'traditional event-based model of trauma' that associates trauma with 'a single, extraordinary, catastrophic event'.<sup>56</sup> This 'punctual' model fails to consider that trauma can stem from a constellation of events as much as from singular

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<sup>49</sup> For example, Lily McManus wrote in her diary on 24 July 1922: 'Darkness and fear over the land. All is weird, unnatural. Men's eyes filled with scales; men's hearts hardening. Hatred and malice and lies abroad. Children learning to be spies. Suspicion everywhere. This is the awful Civil War'. L. MacManus, *White Light And Flame* (Talbot press, 1929), p. 223.

<sup>50</sup> 'The civil war has ended. The effects of that war will be felt in our country for some time, however. The war of friends is the opportunity of the enemy'. 'Coga Carad', *Freemans Journal*, 22 May 1922, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against Green*, p. 274.

<sup>52</sup> Beiner, 'Probing the Boundaries of Irish Memory', p. 305.

<sup>53</sup> David Armitage, 'Ideas of Civil War in 17th-Century England', *Annals of the Japanese Association for the Study of Puritanism* 4 (2009), p. 6; cited in McDowell, 'Civil Wars of Words', p. 296.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph McGarrity, 'Introduction', in Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Talbot Press, 1924), p. xi.

<sup>55</sup> Mugtaba Osman, Andrew C. Parnell, and MacDara McCauley, 'Effect of the Irish Civil War 1922–1923 on Suicide Rates in Ireland: A Retrospective Investigation of the Archives of the Registrar-General for Saorstát Éireann', *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health* 15, no. 3 (21 September 2018).

<sup>56</sup> Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (Springer, 2012), p. 31.

occurrences, and can also accrue from ‘insidious traumas’ connected to structural, social or patriarchal oppression.<sup>57</sup>

The lack of consensus regarding the terminology and the timeline of the ‘Irish Civil War’ further complicates the suitability of such an ‘event-based’ model. As Bill Kissane observes, those on the pro-treaty side took exception to the denomination of ‘civil war’, since it ‘gave their opponents a degree of legitimacy their cause did not entitle them to’, while anti-treatyites tended to portray the fighting as a continuation of the war against the British.<sup>58</sup> As such, the ‘Irish Civil War’ need not adhere to the strictly defined periodisation of June 1922 to May 1923 in official chronology, given that ‘memory does not appear to conform to the linear-chronological paradigm of historical time’.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the term ‘civil war’ was widely employed in contemporary reporting to account for the tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Ulster in the early 1920s, although this does not generally feature in the historiography of the ‘Irish Civil War’. There were also aspects of what Peter Hart refers to as ‘unacknowledged civil war’ throughout the revolutionary period; Irish men served in the British military, in the Royal Irish Constabulary and in the Dublin Metropolitan Police, while Irish-on-Irish violence also played out in the assassination of spies and informers by the IRA.<sup>60</sup> Nor did the civil war end with the ‘dump arms’ order in May 1923. Fighting continued in some areas after that date; the internment of republican prisoners continued until mid-1924, while many clashes based on civil war splits continued throughout the 1920s and beyond. The traumatic memory of civil war came at the end of a period of sustained conflict; the ‘social forgetting’ of the civil war cannot thus be separated from the many other ‘lieux d’oubli’, or ‘sites of oblivion’ in the metanarrative of the Irish revolution. While the testimonies in this study all evoke ‘civil war’ in its various forms, the writers’ commitment to breaking silence often brings them, both consciously and unconsciously, to address other zones of silence in the period. These include Irish participation in the First World War, questions of mental health and institutionalisation, gender-based violence and sexualised violence (against both men and women), the devastation caused by the Spanish flu (1918), the often oppressive gender and

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<sup>57</sup> The term ‘insidious trauma’ was perhaps first employed by Brown. See Laura S. Brown, ‘Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma’, *American Imago* 48, no. 1 (1991), pp 119–33; Joshua Pederson, ‘Trauma and Narrative’, in J. Roger Kurtz (ed.), *Trauma and Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 107.

<sup>58</sup> Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 32.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916–1923* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 293.

social hierarchies within the ranks of the republican movement, the physical displacement evoked by the conflict and partition leading to both internal migration and emigration, and the personal implications of perpetrating violence.

### **‘This Battle Of Mine’: An Ordinary Disease?**

If the Irish Civil War, in its broadest sense, can be considered a cultural trauma, how do ideas of cultural trauma interact with the individual experience of trauma? Or to borrow Graham Dawson’s words, how are ‘individuals affected by a compounding of their own disturbed emotional states through their reactions to the emotion of others’?<sup>61</sup> Writing in his memoir *Vive Moi* (1964), Seán O’Faoláin addressed the fact that the Irish experience of violence ‘bore no comparison to the experiences endured so long and so tenaciously by later revolutionaries elsewhere’.<sup>62</sup> However, such a comparison did little to dampen the lingering effects of his own war experience. Forty years later, he still frequently awoke ‘sweating from a nightmare that has whirled me back [...] again’. As he wrote, ‘[m]y ‘battle’ began in 1922 after the first stage of the Troubles was over, and we broke into Civil War amongst ourselves [...]. This battle of mine was to oppress me traumatically for many years’.<sup>63</sup>

Despite O’Faoláin’s use of the term ‘trauma’ in his 1960s memoir, the employment of the concept of ‘trauma’ to the Irish revolution, though widespread, does not come without its hazards. Alan Gibbs cautions against the application of ‘trauma’ to earlier historical events, as it is ‘dangerous and presumptuous, to homogenize history in this way, to suggest that humans have always suffered in the same way from trauma’.<sup>64</sup> At the time of writing, the notion of trauma is so omnipresent that scholars can postulate that ‘we live in an age of trauma’,<sup>65</sup> and even the idea of ‘lockdown trauma’ is gaining ground.<sup>66</sup> However, the idea of trauma as an exceptional, if prevalent, experience is a phenomenon which has only developed in the course of the last century. As Jungian clinician Emmett Early postulated in the early 1990s, ‘The

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<sup>61</sup> Graham Dawson, ‘The Case of Bloody Sunday’, in Frawley (ed.), *Memory Ireland* (Vol. 3), p. 208.

<sup>62</sup> Seán O’Faoláin, *Vive Moi!: An Autobiography* (Little, Brown, 1964), p. 176.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>64</sup> Stef Craps et al., ‘Decolonizing Trauma Studies Round Table Discussion’, in Sonya Andermahr (ed.), *Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism* (MDPI, 2018), p. 190.

<sup>65</sup> J. Roger Kurtz, ‘Introduction’, in J. Roger Kurtz (ed.), *Trauma and Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja, ‘Introduction’, in Colin David and Hanna Meretoja (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), p. 1.

reason that trauma disorder has only recently been discussed as a problem... is not because it is more common now, but rather because it has only recently become uncommon enough to be considered beyond the norm'.<sup>67</sup>

The term trauma, deriving from the ancient Greek τραῦμα, meaning wound, was originally conceived to describe bodily harm. The shift in the meaning of 'trauma' to express psychological injury is generally associated with the rise of modernity. As Luckhurst outlines, trauma was essentially a 'medico-legal problem' defined by state institutions from the end of the nineteenth century in response to compensation claims for 'railway spine' – a condition generally associated with train accidents, but also with factory mishaps, shipwrecks, or mining disasters.<sup>68</sup> The need to address the condition of thousands of soldiers during the First World War led to a surge of psychological writing on shell shock in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was not until the aftermath of the Vietnam War that the current vocabulary of PTSD was introduced. According to the medical definition, PTSD can be suffered by those confronted with 'an experience' which involves 'actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a physical threat to the physical integrity of the self' considered to be 'outside the range of normal experience'.<sup>69</sup>

In response to developments in psychology, the field of literary trauma theory appeared in the 1990s. These studies largely emerged from a group of scholars associated with Yale University and with a strong interest in Holocaust studies, namely Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Geoffrey Hartman. Drawing on deconstructionist and Freudian-inflected theories, their works foreground 'the concepts of latency, pathology, dissociation, and infection' and place a 'special emphasis on linguistic indeterminacy, ambiguous referentiality, and aporia'.<sup>70</sup> While this study draws on this first wave in literary trauma theory, it also looks to later criticism of this model and specifically to the 'pluralistic model' of trauma studies advocated by Michelle Balaev and others.<sup>71</sup> Rather than focus on the pathological outcome of trauma, the

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<sup>67</sup> Cited in Tal, *Worlds of Hurt* [Online edition].

<sup>68</sup> Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Michelle Balaev, 'Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered', in Michelle Balaev (ed.), *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 1; Michelle Balaev, 'Trauma Studies', in David H. Richter (ed.), *A Companion to Literary Theory* (John Wiley & Sons, 2018), pp 360–372.

<sup>71</sup> For insightful criticism of the dominant model of trauma theory, see Susannah Radstone, 'Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics', *Paragraph* 30, no. 1 (2007), pp 9–29; Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (University of Chicago Press, 2010); Graham Dawson, 'The Meaning of "Moving On": From Trauma to the History and Memory of Emotions in "Post-Conflict" Northern Ireland', *Irish University Review*, Volume 47, Issue 1, pp 82–102; Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing*; Greg Forster, 'Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form', *Narrative* 15, no. 3 (2007), pp 259–85; Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, Alan Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

revisionist school emphasises the range of possible emotional responses to traumatic experience. Moreover, it perceives the unspeakability often associated with traumatic articulation to be less associated with ‘epistemological conundrum or neurobiological fact’ than the result of external social and cultural determinants.<sup>72</sup> As Baleav articulates, ‘to what degree traumatic experience disrupts memory, self, and relation to others is mediated by cultural values and narrative forms rooted in a place that allow or disallow certain emotions to be expressed’<sup>73</sup>. Furthermore, if trauma, though possibly disruptive and dissociative, is not always pathological, the pluralistic model opens up the possibility of positive adaptations to traumatic experience, such as the relatively undertheorised idea of the human capacity for ‘resilience’.<sup>74</sup> As the testimonies in this dissertation will demonstrate, however, it is important not to cede to the ‘over-optimism of recovery’.<sup>75</sup>

While mindful of the dangers of homogenising traumatic experience across time and space, an exploration of the traumatic memory of the Irish Civil War is not only possible, but also fruitful given that the conflict coincided with the opening up of ideas about the psychological legacies of war in the aftermath of the First World War. Although the term ‘trauma’ was not in existence in early twentieth-century Ireland, the testimonies included in this study illustrate the influence in Ireland of Freudian ideas of the subconscious, as well as an interest in spiritualism, the supernatural and the religious to grapple with psychological injuries. In the aftermath of the First World War, Irish hospitals provided services for British army veterans suffering from ‘nerve diseases’, such as shell shock, and many Irish doctors served in the British military.<sup>76</sup> However, although the figure of the shell-shocked soldier took on strong cultural significance in post-war Britain, the newly-conceived Free State largely promoted a narrative of the revolution which foregrounded the heroism of male guerrilla fighters; their suffering and discomfort was rendered invisible. Indeed, the Irish Military

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<sup>72</sup> Michelle Balaev, ‘Trends in Literary Trauma Theory’, *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 41, no. 2 (2008), p. 157.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>74</sup> See George A. Bonanno, ‘Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?’, *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (2004), pp 20–28.

<sup>75</sup> Greg Porter, cited in Tony M. Vinci, *Ghost, Android, Animal: Trauma and Literature Beyond the Human* (Routledge, 2019).

<sup>76</sup> See David Durnin, *The Irish Medical Profession and the First World War* (Springer, 2019); David Durnin and Ian Miller, *Medicine, Health and Irish Experiences of Conflict 1914–45* (Manchester University Press, 2017); Brendan D. Kelly, ‘He Lost Himself Completely’: *Shell Shock and Its Treatment at Dublin’s Richmond War Hospital, 1916–19* (Liffey Press, 2014); Michael Robinson, ‘Perceptions of the Mentally Ill Irish Population during the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries’, *Études Irlandaises*, no. 42–2 (29 November 2017), pp 59–71; Michael Robinson, ‘“Nobody’s Children?”: The Ministry of Pensions and the Treatment of Disabled Great War Veterans in the Irish Free State, 1921–1939’, *Irish Studies Review* 25, no. 3 (3 July 2017), pp 316–35.

Service Pensions Board was slower to recognise psychic injury than compensation boards in Britain, such as the London-based Irish Grants Committee, which included ‘shock’ in its list of ‘physical injuries’.<sup>77</sup> In response to emasculating colonial stereotyping of the Irish, revolutionaries regularly presented the English as effeminate and nervous in contrast to the more resilient Irish.<sup>78</sup> Applications for ‘wound’ or ‘disability’ pensions to the Military Service Pensions Board further indicate that there was little consistency in medical diagnosis or treatment. Revolutionaries were diagnosed with a wide array of conditions including ‘neurasthenia’, ‘nerves’, ‘neurosis’, and ‘nervous breakdown’ during the early decades of the Free State. Many struggled to gain recognition or compensation for such ‘diseases’.

The rudimentary medical treatments employed to ‘manage’ the psychic consequence of war also illustrate how understandings of ‘nervous conditions’ were highly gendered. Etymologically, the word ‘hysteria’ derives from the word for uterus and was believed to be caused by a ‘wandering womb’; ‘insanity’ was thus conflated with ‘femininity’.<sup>79</sup> Female revolutionaries claiming for wound/disability allowances from the Military Service Pensions Board on account of mental health were routinely sent for gynaecological testing; conditions such endometriosis were even read as evidence of nervous conditions.<sup>80</sup> This highly gendered understanding of trauma is also reflected in the gender-specific medical management of ‘exhausted nerves’. Dublin-based gynaecologist and republican sympathiser Dr. Robert Farnan was known to cure male revolutionaries by ‘merely speaking to the men’; this might suggest some form of psychoanalytic techniques in order to aid swift recovery and continued military engagement. It seems, from available evidence, that his female patients were more likely to be prescribed ‘rest cures’ which were predicated on the patients’ removal from their stressful environment – for a period of six weeks, in Siobhán Lankford’s case. The gendered subtext of trauma also meant that women were perhaps more likely to admit to ‘nervous breakdowns’

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<sup>77</sup> Clark, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War*, p. 104. This is particularly apparent in the case of Charles Dalton. As late as 1940, the Irish Military Pensions Board were willing to process Dalton’s claim for an injury to his hand, however internal notes indicated ‘Of course, we could not touch the question of the disease aspect of his disability’. Note by JJH, 5 June 1940. Military Service Pension Collection, 24SP1153.

<sup>78</sup> Cumann na mBan’s Aoife de Búrca, for example, dismisses ‘a number of golfers’ in her witness statement who ‘appeared to be of the West British type’. She characterises them by their ‘delicate nerves’. Aoife de Búrca, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 359, undated, pp 1–2.

<sup>79</sup> See Síobhra Aiken, “‘The Women Who Had Been Straining Every Nerve’’: Gender-Specific Medical Management of Trauma in the Irish Revolution (1916–1923)”, in Melania Terrazas Gallego (ed.), *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Peter Lang, 2020), pp 133–158.

<sup>80</sup> An Army Pension memo dated 14 February 1934 outlined that ‘in certain types of cases [of] women applicants, the Pensions Board will occasionally require that an examination and report by a gynaecological specialist may be necessary’. Irish Military Archive, Military Service Pensions Collection, Administrative Files, Army Pensions Board, 1/M/47.

given that the vocabulary was more readily at their disposal. Mental injuries among men, however, could be deemed as a failure in masculinity.

The taboo surrounding questions of masculinity and mental health is apparent in the weaponisation of the language of lunacy which took on particular resonance during the civil war. As Foster outlines, Free State news sources, like the *Freeman's Journal*, presented republicans – or ‘Irregulars’ as they were dubbed – as childish and irrational, and diagnosed them with conditions such as ‘neuroses’, ‘megalomania’, ‘hysteria’ and ‘madness’.<sup>81</sup> Equally, anti-treatyites mocked their pro-treaty opposition for being ‘hysteric’ and ‘grossly insane’ ‘Freak Staters’.<sup>82</sup> Such deriding pseudomedical language was more often reserved for female revolutionaries who were branded by politicians, journalists and church leaders alike as ‘harpies, ill-suited for rational political discourse’, ‘half-crazed, hysterical women’, and ‘neurotic girls’.<sup>83</sup> There is evidence that such political rhetoric led to the downplaying of actual psychic trauma. Síghle Humphreys recounts in her unpublished account of her civil war internment how a fellow prisoner, Sadie Dowling, was bed-ridden for days and groaning with pain despite having no visible injuries. When Dowling made a sudden recovery after a sentry shot through her cell window, Humphreys lamented that ‘people like that give us all the name of being hysterical and neurotic’.<sup>84</sup> However, she retrospectively acknowledged the prevalence of such conditions of which she had previously been sceptical: ‘And still I believe it is an ordinary disease, and a person can suffer as much with it, as with anything else, so I suppose I should not blame them, but I used to.’<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, p. 45.

<sup>82</sup> Dorothy Macardle, ‘The Kilmainham Tortures: Experiences of a Prisoner’, *Éire*, 1 May 1923, Kilmainham Gaol Museum, Dublin 20MS-1B31-28; ‘Free State Hysteria: Hare Park Camp’, *Éire*, 7 April 1923; Dorothy Macardle, *Tragedies of Kerry, 1922–1923* (Irish Book Bureau 1924); ‘The NDU Invincible’, [booklet written by female internees in the North Dublin Union 14 May 1923], Kilmainham Gaol Archive, 20MS-1B43-08.

<sup>83</sup> President William Cosgrove claimed in his 1923 New Year’s address that ‘neurotic girls are among the most active adherents to the Irregular cause’. The Bishop of Elphin’s Lenten Pastoral denounced members of Cumann na mBan as ‘half-crazed, hysterical women’, while the Free State Attorney General condemned ‘diehard women’ ‘whose ecstasies at their extremest can find no outlet so satisfying as destruction’. Perhaps the most oft-cited example is that of pro-treaty writer P. S. O’Hegarty whose 1924 account, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, dedicated a chapter to the vices of republican women; they were ‘harpies, ill-suited for rational political discourse’ who were responsible for making devils of men, through ‘her implacability, her bitterness, her hysteria’. See Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, pp 33–34; ‘Lenten Pastorals: Lawlessness Condemned’, *Offaly Independent*, 17 February 1923, p. 3; P. S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (University College Dublin Press, 1924), p. 75.

<sup>84</sup> Papers of Síghle Humphreys, UCD Archive, UCDA P106/979 (1). Transcripts available at: ‘Síghle’s Account of her first years in prison 1922–23’, <https://humphrysfamilytree.com> (Accessed 10 August 2020).

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

## ‘The Imperative To Tell’: Uncovering an Alternative Archive of Testimony

Humphreys’ account illustrates the prevailing taboo around nervous conditions and indicates that the realities of individual, psychic trauma were far more contentious than generalisations regarding the collective ‘tragedy’ and ‘bitterness’ of civil war. Nevertheless, a significant number of testimonial accounts emerged in the aftermath of the conflict that both address and narratively *perform* the psychological impact of war.<sup>86</sup> While testifying to trauma can be destabilising for the individual (Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub warn that the ‘price of speaking is re-living’), traumatic experience can also be as much *generative* as *privative*.<sup>87</sup> For Holocaust survivor Primo Levi, the narrative impulse to tell and retell his story was ‘something as basic as an alimentary need’.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, many of the testimonies explored in this dissertation can be considered as the products of civil war veterans’ ‘urge to tell a story, make a point, create an aesthetic experience, to move people in a particular way’.<sup>89</sup> Laub too identifies the ‘imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one’s story’ as a characteristic of those who have lived through traumatic events.<sup>90</sup> This trauma-telling is connected to the need to assign *meaning* to traumatic experience, which is often considered a necessary step towards some form of healing.<sup>91</sup> For Meg Jensen, meaning is produced in two main ways: firstly, through the private construction of a ‘coherent, listenable narrative of a traumatic experience’, and secondly, ‘by sharing that narrative through a public testimonial act’.<sup>92</sup>

Studies of the commemorative culture of the Irish revolution have not sufficiently addressed popular forms of remembrance in published ‘middle-brow’ or ‘subliterary’ autobiographical projects. This focus on official memory-making may reflect the general

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<sup>86</sup> As Kacandes contends, texts ‘can perform trauma, in the sense that they can fail to tell the story, by eliding, repeating, and fragmenting components of the story’. Irene Kacandes, ‘Narrative Witnessing as Memory Work: Reading Gertrud Kolmar’s *A Jewish Mother*’, in Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (eds), *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (University Press of New England, 1999), p. 56.

<sup>87</sup> Meg Jensen, *The Art and Science of Trauma and the Autobiographical: Negotiated Truths* (Springer, 2019), p. 66.

<sup>88</sup> Cited in Richard Kearney, ‘Narrating Pain: The Power of Catharsis’, *Paragraph* 30, no. 1 (2007), p. 61.

<sup>89</sup> Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 116.

<sup>90</sup> Dori Laub, ‘An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival’, in Felman and Laub (eds), *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing*, p. 78.

<sup>91</sup> Oona Frawley, ‘Introduction’, in Frawley, *Memory Ireland* (Vol 3), p. 7. For further discussion of the connection between narrative and healing, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (Penguin UK, 2014); Judith Harris, *Signifying Pain: Constructing and Healing the Self through Writing* (SUNY Press, 2003); Louise A. DeSalvo, *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives* (Beacon Press, 2000).

<sup>92</sup> Meg Jensen, ‘Testimony’, in Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), p. 73.

scepticism of popular ‘mythology’ within empirically-motivated studies of Irish history.<sup>93</sup> David Fitzpatrick considers the Irish Free State’s public commemorative policy as a ‘chronicle of embarrassment’.<sup>94</sup> Dolan too observes that the official approach to the civil war was ‘to suppress, to remember selectively, to try to forget’.<sup>95</sup> This is evident from the State’s failure to erect and maintain a cenotaph on Leinster Lawn and the relative neglect of the memory of pro-treaty leaders such as Michael Collins and Arthur Griffiths. Nevertheless, there are numerous examples of ‘counter-memories’ and mechanisms adopted by communities to deal with the conflict. The families of Free State soldiers privately marked their loss by erecting roadside tributes. The anti-treaty side located their loss within a wider republican narrative of triumphant defeat; the National Graves Association erected Celtic crosses, statues and memorials to honour the republican dead of the war of independence and civil war, although they excluded the Free State dead.<sup>96</sup> As studies of civil wars internationally illustrate, popular forms of memory often challenged the state-sponsored repression of ‘public and collective re-elaboration of the past traumatic experiences in the name of tabula rasa’.<sup>97</sup> Oral histories of the Finnish Civil War gathered in the 1960s demonstrate how repressed histories lived on in popular memory, while in Tajikistan, ‘local ways of remembering the civil war allow individuals and communities to engage with the past’ ‘outside the master narrative of the regime’.<sup>98</sup>

Although Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil shied away from public commemoration of the civil war, there was little effort by successive governments to suppress published testimonies from the civil war, unlike other post-civil war European states at the time.<sup>99</sup> As Flanagan highlights, despite ‘the Free State’s notoriously ruthless treatment of ‘Irregulars’, the new government was far from totalitarian in policing dissenting discourse

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<sup>93</sup> Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance*, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> David Fitzpatrick, ‘Commemoration in the Irish Free State: A Chronicle of Embarrassment’, in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp 184–203.

<sup>95</sup> Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923–2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 124.

<sup>96</sup> Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War*, p. 137; Anne Dolan, ‘An Army of Our Fenian Dead: Republicanism, Monuments and Commemoration’ in Fearghal McGarry (ed.), *Republicanism in Modern Ireland* (University College Dublin Press, 2003), pp 132–44.

<sup>97</sup> Elisa Adami, ‘The Truth of Fiction: Some Stories of the Lebanese Civil Wars’, in Deslandes et al. (eds), *Civil War and Narrative*, p. 110.

<sup>98</sup> Anne Heimo and Ulla-Maija Peltonen, ‘Memories and Histories, Public and Private: After the Finnish Civil War’, in Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (eds), *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (Routledge, 2003), pp 42–56; Sophie Roche, ‘Gender in Narrative Memory: The Example of Civil War Narratives in Tajikistan’, *Ab Imperio* 2012, no. 3 (2012), pp 279–307.

<sup>99</sup> Bill Kissane, ‘Review of *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923–2000; Our Own Devices: National Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland*, by Anne Dolan and Ewan Morris’, *Field Day Review* 2 (2006), p. 338. See Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco’s Spain, 1936–1945* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

about the revolution once the civil war had ended [...] It made no effort to actively suppress Republican accounts'.<sup>100</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the civil war, both sides produced 'polemical accounts and 'instant histories' justifying their respective causes'.<sup>101</sup> It was not until 1942 that Fianna Fáil Minister for Defence Frank Aiken banned accounts of the revolution for fear 'the animosities and bitterness of the civil war would be disastrous to public morale and national security'.<sup>102</sup>

There is a strong belief that published memoirists totally avoided the civil war, based perhaps on the influential accounts by individuals such as Dan Breen, Michael Brennan, and Tom Barry, who had 'very little to say' about the civil war.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, despite the 'unprecedented proliferation of autobiography and memoir' relating to the Irish revolution,<sup>104</sup> very few straight autobiographies detailing the civil war emerged in the decades after the conflict. Most standard accounts of the revolution famously ended on a victorious note at the truce and omitted the years 1922–24. The fact that other civil war accounts – such as Ernie O'Malley's *The Singing Flame* (1978) – were published posthumously further indicates a reluctance to address the civil war. However, such a belief fails to consider how all such accounts were filtered through the memory of the civil war; it also overlooks popular published narratives, many of which adopted literary forms.

The downplaying of popular literary evidence reflects a reluctance among Irish historians to venture 'beyond conventional conceptions of how the past can be studied'.<sup>105</sup> This also occurs elsewhere. Graham Dawson argues that 'less attention has been paid to imaginative fiction' of the Northern Troubles in critical debate about the 'psychological, ethical and political sensitivities involved in producing, recording and circulating victims' stories'.<sup>106</sup> Considerations of literary fiction of the Spanish Civil War were also initially neglected; a 1957 survey of Spanish novels concluded that '[n]uestros novelistas la han eludido siempre [la

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<sup>100</sup> Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 12.

<sup>101</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas, 'Ceisteanna—Questions, Oral Answers – Operation of Censorship', Dáil Éireann, 4 February 1942. Cited in Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939–1945: Neutrality, Politics, and Society* (Cork University Press, 1996), p. 107.

<sup>103</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against Green*, p. xii.

<sup>104</sup> Karen Steele, 'Revolutionary Lives in the Rearview Mirror: Memoir and Autobiography', in Marjorie Elizabeth Howes (ed.), *Irish Literature in Transition, 1880–1940: Volume 4* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 114.

<sup>105</sup> Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 2.

<sup>106</sup> Graham Dawson, 'Storytelling, Imaginative Fiction and the Representation of Victims of the Irish Troubles: A Cultural Analysis of Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness*', in Lesley Lelourec and Grainne O'Keefe-Vigneron (eds), *Ireland and Victims: Confronting the Past, Forging the Future* (Peter Lang, 2012), p. 139–140.

guerra civil]. Sus razones tendrán'.<sup>107</sup> However, as Gareth Thomas illustrates, almost one hundred novels dealing with the civil war had been published in Spain and abroad by this time.<sup>108</sup> While literary scholars and historians continue to maintain that authors and participants generally 'preferred to remain silent about the Civil War',<sup>109</sup> Peter Costello postulated as far back as 1977 in his study *The Heart Grown Brutal* that, 'to think of the Civil War as a failure of imagination would be wrong. It was quite the otherwise'.<sup>110</sup>

Given the contentiousness of bearing witness to civil war in a society which officially 'tried to forget', less conventional, hybridised genres of narrative arguably enabled authors to satisfy the simultaneous need to disclose and conceal often associated with the posttraumatic autobiographical project.<sup>111</sup> These cross-genre testimonial writings enabled veterans to carve out a 'special space accorded to risky speech', in which, as Jay Winter outlines, 'one can offend and provoke by saying things which everyone knows but no one says in public'.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, the espousal of literary forms was reflective of narrative practices of the time; the genre of autofiction proved particularly popular in Ireland from the turn of the century.<sup>113</sup> This swerve from straight autobiography is equally evident in the abundance of fictionalised testimonies of the First World War, such as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) or Ralph Hale Mottram's *The Spanish Farm* (1924).

In his study of the testimonies of French veterans of the First World War, Leonard V. Smith observes not only that fictionalised testimonies gained pride of place, but also that fiction 'came to dominate testimony, and altered testimony itself along the way'.<sup>114</sup> To date, these hybridised forms of remembrance have not gained the scholarly attention they merit. Although literary narratives are often employed as 'flourishes' in historical studies, historians of the Irish revolution overwhelmingly privilege published autobiographies, witness statements to the Bureau of Military History, and personal accounts from newspapers and journals, many of

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<sup>107</sup> 'It [the civil war] has always eluded our novelists. They have their reasons.' Gareth Thomas, *The Novel of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1975)* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State*, p. 331.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Costello, *The Heart Grown Brutal: The Irish Revolution in Literature from Parnell to the Death of Yeats, 1891–1939* (Gill & Macmillan, 1977), p. 193.

<sup>111</sup> Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Cornell University Press, 2001); Meg Jensen, *The Art and Science of Trauma and the Autobiographical: Negotiated Truths* (Springer, 2019).

<sup>112</sup> Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance*, 2018, p. 28. Jay Winter, 'Thinking about Silence', in Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (eds), *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 30.

<sup>113</sup> See Ronan Crowley, 'Revivalism à Clef, Revivalism sans Clef: Writing the Renaissance in James Stephens, Brinsley MacNamara, and Eimar O'Duffy', *New Hibernia Review* 23, no. 3 (2019), pp 129–44.

<sup>114</sup> Leonard V. Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 150.

which were published or gathered in the 1950s or later. It has been suggested that the ‘major forum for recollection and comment on the 1913–1923 period among former republican activists *were not plays, novels and short stories* but the memoirs and histories written by their former comrades in arms’ (my emphasis).<sup>115</sup> However, as Hayden White argues, there is no such dichotomy between fictionalised accounts and ‘memoirs and histories’. As White contends, historical narratives should be understood as ‘verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences’.<sup>116</sup> Closer interrogations of apparently unmediated historical memoirs reveal that they are laden with ‘vulnerabilities’: revolutionary memoirists regularly narrate incidents at which they were not present;<sup>117</sup> they often intertextually draw on preceding fiction, such as Ernie O’Malley’s documented evocation in his memoir of Frank O’Connor’s short story ‘Guests of the Nation’ (see Chapter Five)<sup>118</sup>; and their accounts were no less susceptible to the controlling influences of editors, bureau investigators, publishers and translators, than were literary testimonies. The interactions between fictionalised testimonies and standard accounts thus suggest that the fiction of the Irish revolution also ‘altered testimony along the way’. This project thus understands ‘testimony’ as any literature which attempts to bear witness to traumatic events, be it fictional or non-fictional.<sup>119</sup>

The literary nature of civil war narratives, more so than narratives of the earlier independence struggle, is perhaps symptomatic of the intertextuality often associated with civil war representation. As Nicholas McDowell contends, ‘writing about the experience of civil war, whether in London in 1649, or in Dublin in 1923, or in Belfast in 1972, involves working within characteristic tropes and images of the genre, and these finally derive from the Roman

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<sup>115</sup> Eve Morrison, ‘The Bureau of Military History: Separatist Veterans’ Narratives of the Irish Revolution’, n (Unpublished PhD, Trinity College Dublin 2011), p. 25.

<sup>116</sup> Hayden White, ‘The Historical Text as Literary Artifact’, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural, Criticism* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) p. 82.

<sup>117</sup> Examples include: Colm Ó Gaora, *Mise* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1943); Hartnett, *Victory and Woe*.

<sup>118</sup> R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (Penguin UK, 2014), p. 375.

<sup>119</sup> While the term ‘testimonial fiction’ is employed differently in various contexts, I propose a broad understanding of testimonial fiction akin to that advanced by Anna Richardson; testimonial fiction is ‘a fictional narrative with a large testimonial component: a narrative that, although technically classified as fiction, serves the purpose of a testimony and involves the same practices as testimony on the part of both the author and the reader’. Testimonial fiction ‘does not presuppose that the story contained within the narrative is grounded in incidents from the author’s own life, unlike [...] ‘autobiographical fiction’, although it allows for the possibility that this may be the case’. Fictional testimony, on the other hand, might (although not necessarily) denote a fictional account written as a testimony. See Anna Richardson, ‘Mapping the lines of fact and fiction in Holocaust testimonial novels’, in Louise Olga Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (eds), *Comparative Central European Holocaust Studies* (Purdue University Press, 2009), p. 53.

tradition, whether or not the protagonists were fully aware of that tradition'.<sup>120</sup> As Armitage outlines, the Romans invented the term civil war (*bellum civile*) in the first century B.C.E and were the first to try to understand civil war through narrative, as disseminated in the works of poets and orators such as Appian, Augustine, Caesar, Florus, Lucan, Plutarch, and Tacitus.<sup>121</sup> This literary inheritance is apparent in civil war literature internationally through tropes such as the 'brother against brother' motif which can be traced back to the founding myth of Romulus and Remus.<sup>122</sup> For Richard Thomas, the intertextual aspects of civil war literature, 'complicate and intensify the aesthetic response to the suffering and loss associated with civil discord'. The acknowledgement of other instances of civil war across time and space, 'works against the merely local or straightforwardly historical'.<sup>123</sup> These intertextual motifs also have a more practical, consolatory function in their ability to appeal to readers and elicit sympathy for both sides of the conflict. As Janet Pérez remarks in the context of the Spanish Civil War:

Many portrayals of the war are allegorical or symbolical, mythical, or otherwise not strictly historical. Women writers as well as men have portrayed the war indirectly via intrafamilial or interpersonal conflicts: the 'war of the sexes' [...], the Cain-Abel motif [...], or the symbolic marital conflict between partners whose backgrounds or values situate them on opposing sides, easily identifiable with the opponents in the Civil War.<sup>124</sup>

These universal tropes emerge in the Irish context, particularly the motif of the romance triangle, the domestic split, the 'brothers divided' motif and the Cain-Abel trope (see Chapters Two and Three). While these international tropes are prevalent in the literature of the Irish Civil War, motifs from Irish mythology also served the same function, as evident in the evocation of the battle between Cúchulainn and Ferdia to denote civil war.<sup>125</sup> Aside from providing universal symbols of suffering with which both pro- and anti-treatyites could relate, this reliance on metaphor can be read as a distancing strategy to evoke traumatic experience.

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<sup>120</sup> McDowell, 'Civil Wars of Words', p. 297.

<sup>121</sup> Armitage, 'Civil Wars, from Beginning .. to End?', p. 1829.

<sup>122</sup> Alison Keith, 'Engendering Civil War in Flavian Epic', in Lauren Donovan Ginsberg and Darcy Anne Krasne (eds), *After 69 CE – Writing Civil War in Flavian Rome* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2018), p. 297.

<sup>123</sup> Richard Thomas, "'My Brother Got Killed in the War': Internecine Intertextuality' in Brian Breed, Cynthia Damon, and Andreola Rossi (eds), *Citizens of Discord: Rome and Its Civil Wars* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 293.

<sup>124</sup> Janet Pérez, 'Behind the Lines: The Spanish Civil War and Women Writers' in Janet Pérez and Wendell M. Aycock (eds), *The Spanish Civil War in Literature* (Texas Tech University Press, 1990), p. 171.

<sup>125</sup> Examples include Alice Mulligan's poem, 'Till Ferdia Came', praised as 'the only good thing to have come out of the Civil War', Séamus Ó Grianna's story 'Cogadh na gCarad', and the novel, *Buaidh na Treise: Cogadh Gaedheal re Gallaibh* by Mícheál Ó Gríobhtha. See Alan Tittley, *Úrscéal na Gaeilge* (An Clóchomhar, 1992).

As Jensen contends, '[t]he more painful the experience [...] the more necessary the indirect speech of metaphor'.<sup>126</sup>

Civil war accounts are also often smuggled into texts which, on the surface at least, are located in other eras of history. Pro-treaty politician Piaras Béaslaí's 1928 play *An Danar* was set in tenth-century Dublin, although theatre viewers could easily see that its 'cogadh bráthar' referred to more recent events.<sup>127</sup> Civil war texts are frequently concealed in narratives which apparently address the less contentious struggle for independence. Frank O'Connor's fictional short story 'Freedom' is located in British camps, but is highly redolent of his civil war prison experience as outlined in his essay 'A Boy in Prison'. Seán O'Faoláin similarly draws on his civil war experience in 'Fugue' and 'The Bombshop', although both stories are purportedly set in the independence struggle. For John Grant, this may suggest O'Faoláin's attempt to 'alleviate the trauma of the Irish Civil War'<sup>128</sup>, while Costello laments that 'some of the truth may be jeopardised by such blurrings of historical reality'.<sup>129</sup> However, this obscuring of chronological time may have been a self-protective strategy. Such concealment may also have been dictated by market demands, as in the case of Liam O'Flaherty's civil war novel *The Informer* (1925) which was transposed to the war of independence in the film version (1935).<sup>130</sup> It is also a further reminder that memory cannot be confined to strict historical dates, and that traumatic memory, in particular, 'can alter the linearity of historical, narrativised time' (as explored further in Chapter Five).<sup>131</sup>

This study does not dispute the many children of revolutionaries who testify to the reticence of their parents. Revisiting the period, for some, proved incredibly difficult. Joe Good's son recounts that his father could not include the civil war in his memoirs of the revolution: 'whenever he came to thoughts of the Civil War there was a hiatus in his writing. He would just come to a stop'.<sup>132</sup> Breandán Ó hÉithir equally notes that Séamus Ó Maoileoin couldn't complete his civil war memoirs after his 1958 war of independence account, *B'fhiú an braon fola* (1958): 'Dúirt sé go raibh sé ag iarraidh tabhairt faoi ach go mba phionós aimsire, leis é. Tháinig na deora ina shúile nuair a labhair sé ar an bpeannaid a bhain le cur síos a

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<sup>126</sup> Jensen, *The Art and Science of Trauma and the Autobiographical*, p. 162.

<sup>127</sup> Philip O'Leary, 'Presenting a Challenging Past: Piaras Béaslaí's play *An Danar* (1928)', 39th California Celtic Conference – UC Berkeley, March 2017. My thanks to Professor O'Leary for sharing this conference paper.

<sup>128</sup> See John Grant, "'I Was Too Chickenhearted to Publish": Seán Ó'Faoláin, Displacement and History Re-Written', *Estudios Irlandeses*, January 2017, p. 50.

<sup>129</sup> Costello, *The Heart Grown Brutal*, p. 218.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid*, p. 221.

<sup>131</sup> Jenny Edkins, cite in Frawley, 'Introduction', *Memory Ireland* (Vol 3), p. 5.

<sup>132</sup> Joe Good, *Inside the GPO 1916: A First-Hand Account* (O'Brien Press, 2015), p.187.

dhéanamh ar eachtraí a bhain le seanchomrádaithe a chuaigh ar thaobh an tSaorstáit'.<sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, writing itself may have served as a distancing strategy. Committing words to print was easier for some than speech. As explored in Chapter Five, George Lennon encoded his IRA experience in fiction and diary form, while simultaneously refusing to broach the 'unmentionable Civil War' with his family.<sup>134</sup>

Moreover, the loquacity with which many revolutionaries professed their reticence to speak about the civil war is often telling in itself. Despite an acceptance among historians that the statements deposited in the Bureau of Military History abided by the terms of reference outlined and thus elided the civil war, the collection not only contains many accounts of civil war, it is also revealing for its evidence of reticence.<sup>135</sup> A number of veterans outline their reluctance to 'deal in any more detail with any of the engagements I had with former comrades during the civil war'.<sup>136</sup> Another veteran expressed his reluctance 'to express any views concerning the sad days of civil war and bitter strife that divided homes and sundered lifelong friendships. Let us try to forget what is painful – let us remember what is heartening and inspiring'.<sup>137</sup> Yet even such commitment to forgetting what is painful contains a contradiction. The speakers' avowed intention to 'disremember' paradoxically breaks a silence and draws further attention to that which has supposedly been condemned to oblivion. As Maria Beville and Sara Dybris McQuaid contend, the 'very word silence is a paradox as it breaks silence, ending the caesura and deferring *meaning*' (my emphasis).<sup>138</sup>

As a number of scholars illustrate, declarations as to the 'impossibility of communication' were frequently a 'rhetorical tool'.<sup>139</sup> In his 1966 autobiography, Micheál Breathnach professes his wish to forget and silence the implications of the civil war: 'Níl ar

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<sup>133</sup> 'He said he wanted to do it, but that it was a punishing task for him. His eyes filled with tears when he spoke of the pain he felt when describing what happened to old comrades who took the Free State side.' Breandán Ó hEithir, 'An Lasair a Múchadh Nach Mór', *Comhar* 37, no. 6 (1978), p. 17.

<sup>134</sup> Ivan Lennon, *Lennons in Time* (Self-published, c. 2017), p. 7. Available at:

[https://www.academia.edu/32727560/LENNONS\\_IN\\_TIME](https://www.academia.edu/32727560/LENNONS_IN_TIME) (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>135</sup> See Evi Gkotsaridis, *Trials of Irish History: Genesis and Evolution of a Reappraisal* (Routledge, 2013). Morrison lists the following notable accounts of the civil war collected by the Bureau of Military History: James Ryan, Frank Hynes, Peter Woods, John Grant, Thomas Luckie, Frank Hynes, Patrick Moylett, Thomas Treacy, Alphonsus Sweeney, John O'Keefe, Sean E. Walshe, Michael Fitzpatrick, and Sean Scott. Morrison, 'The Bureau of Military History', pp 70–71.

<sup>136</sup> John Grant, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 658, 21 March 1952, p. 30.

<sup>137</sup> Rev. Fr. Aloysius Travers, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 200, p. 18. This statement was originally delivered as a lecture to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and a version was published under the title 'Easter Week 1916/Personal Recollections' in the *Capuchin Annual* in 1942, pp 211–220.

<sup>138</sup> Maria Beville and Sara Dybris McQuaid, 'Speaking of Silence: Comments from an Irish Studies Perspective', *Nordic Irish Studies* 11, no. 2 (2012), p. 2.

<sup>139</sup> Seán Ryder cited in Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Cork University Press, 1997), p. 4.

intinn agam cur síos a dhéanamh ar an dochar a rinne an Cogadh Cathartha ná ar na drochiarsmaí a d'fhág sé ina dhiaidh. B'fhearr liom brat mór dubh a ligean anuas ar an tréimhse sin agus é a chur as mo chuimhne ar fad *dá bhféadfainn é*' (my emphasis).<sup>140</sup> Even though Breathnach's account is cited as evidence of the silence surrounding the civil war, closer inspection reveals that his disclaimer in fact serves as a prefatory remark to heighten emotional impact.<sup>141</sup> In the next chapter Breathnach proceeds to detail his best efforts to avoid the disintegration of friendships over the treaty, as former colleagues tried to convert him to both the pro- and anti-treaty positions.

Breathnach's account thus suggests that even 'silence' could be decidedly *effable*. Moreover, like the veterans whose writings will be explored in the chapters that follow, his hope to banish the civil war from his memory, *if he could*, remains in conflict with his 'imperative to tell and to be heard'.<sup>142</sup>

## Chapter Outlines

This dissertation is divided into five thematic chapters. **Chapter Two** examines contemporary understandings regarding the potential therapeutic effect provided by writing. It focuses on the writings of pro-treatyite Desmond Ryan who saw narrative as essential for exorcising the 'spiritual wounds' of the civil war. Ryan identified three testimonies that illustrated the consolatory effect of narrative: Peadar O'Donnell's prison diary and two virtually unknown novels by Francis Carty and Patrick Mulloy. My analysis of these testimonies considers how fiction could accommodate more taboo topics than first-person narrative, how popular realist middlebrow, even lowbrow, fiction could convey trauma as much as the fragmented narrative aesthetic of high modernism, and how anti-treaty and pro-treaty veterans tapped into distinct forms of traumatic remembrance.

While much fiction of this period perpetuates traditional (and even misogynistic) gender roles, **Chapter Three** considers how fiction nevertheless provided female

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<sup>140</sup> 'I do not intend to discuss the harm caused by the Civil War nor the evil consequences it left behind. I would rather draw a big black curtain down on that period and put it out of my memory altogether *if I could*' (my emphasis). Mícheál Breathnach, *Cuimhne an tSeanpháiste* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1966), p. 216.

<sup>141</sup> O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State*, p. 332.

<sup>142</sup> Dori Laub, 'Truth and Testimony', p. 78.

revolutionaries with a means to testify to, and even exteriorise, the psychological complexities of women's war experience. It outlines how their fictional writing provided a vehicle to contest the state-sanctioned silence surrounding the civil war and the developing hypermasculine narrative of the revolution. Their writings also challenge the objectification and questionable medicalisation of women's pain.

**Chapter Four** considers how fictionalised testimonies of veterans of the Irish revolution address questions of sexuality and sexual violence in ways that first-person autobiography does not. These testimonies include implicit and explicit textual renderings of homosexuality among militants, IRA activists' mistreatment of prostitutes, the sexual harassment, hair shearing, and rape of female revolutionaries and the sexual humiliation of male combatants. This chapter highlights how such testimonies challenge the idea that the IRA prided themselves on their pious soldierly behaviour. However, it also points to the ethical complexities of testifying to sexual violence. While such representations break a silence, they also risk further coding sexuality or even eroticising sexual violence.

**Chapter Five** addresses how fiction is a particularly privileged form for addressing the contentious question of perpetrator trauma. It considers the intertextual resonance of Frank O'Connor's short story 'Guests of the Nation' which was adopted by veterans in memoirs and fiction alike to articulate their own memories of committing violence. In particular, this chapter addresses the writings of anti-treatyite George Lennon and pro-treatyite Anthony O'Connor, who both resorted to hybridised fictional writings in the 1970s as the northern Troubles broke out, in order to address, and even exorcise, their own involvement in committing violence – against both men and women.

This project does not assume that the authors discussed would have been diagnosed with any sort of medical or psychiatric condition due to their wartime experience. It is concerned, moreover, with the narrative forms they adopted in their writings to address traumatic experience. Their highly politicised urge to testify was a direct affront to the widespread effort to 'forget' the 'painful' experience of the Irish Civil War.



## CHAPTER TWO: 'RIDDING OURSELVES OF THE PAST': TESTIMONIES OF THE IRISH CIVIL WAR

Desmond Ryan's 1934 memoir, *Remembering Sion: A Chronicle of Storm and Quiet*, chronicles his role in the 1916 Rising and his writing of the 'blood column' for the *Freeman's Journal* during the war of independence. His dismay over the split caused by the treaty rings through. For Ryan it left 'a bloody gulf of Civil War memories that hardly a generation will wipe out'.<sup>1</sup> Critics remained undecided: as one reviewer grumbled, 'Looking back is a sad business. Mr. Desmond Ryan is really too young to indulge in it, and the events on which he looks back are too near and too vivid for him or for any of this generation to write of them with impartiality'.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, Ryan defended his decision to write: having 'waited some ten years', exorcising his thoughts on the civil war enabled him to 'recover' 'good tempers'.<sup>3</sup> As he contended in a lecture entitled 'Still Remembering Sion' delivered to the Irish Literary Society in Autumn 1934:

It is not harping or brooding on the past but ridding ourselves of the past, blowing off the worst and retaining the best, and getting the picture and the experience of the past in proportion. What's wrong with Ireland just at present is that Ireland won't blow off steam once and for all but keeps all the Civil War and other war memories festering in her subconsciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Ryan was one of many revolutionaries whose writing was driven by what Frances Flanagan refers to as a 'therapeutic goal'<sup>5</sup>: Rosamond Jacob's history *The Rise of the United Irishmen 1791–94* (1937) was purportedly written as 'an attempt to heal the wounds of the Civil War and the resulting splits in contemporary Irish life';<sup>6</sup> Frank O'Connor's 1937 biography of Michael Collins, *The Big Fellow* – against whom he fought – is described in the preface as 'an act of reparation'<sup>7</sup>; while Seán O'Faoláin found that writing enabled him to regain control over his revolutionary memories: 'I do not regret the experience – if only because

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<sup>1</sup> Desmond Ryan, *Remembering Sion: A Chronicle of Storm and Quiet* (A. Barker, 1934), p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> 'This sad business of looking back', *Irish Independent*, 22 May 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Desmond Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', *University Review* 5, no. 2 (1968), p. 252.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>5</sup> Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 186.

<sup>6</sup> Kit Ó Céirín and Cyril Ó Céirín, *Women of Ireland: A Biographic Dictionary* (Tír Eolas, 1996), p. 111.

<sup>7</sup> Frank O'Connor, *The Big Fellow: A Life of Michael Collins* (T. Nelson & sons, limited, 1937), p. ix.

its conflicts gave me something to mull over and write about – but I confess that I have been much more contented since I put things in their place. It took me over thirty years to do it.’<sup>8</sup>

Ryan’s interest lay not only in the personal catharsis writing could provide its author through the expression of the subconscious, but also in the narrativisation of these ‘spiritual wounds’ by others and how the collective sharing of testimony might facilitate the re-establishment of social relationships. In his biography of Éamon de Valera *Unique Dictator* (1936), he again addressed the therapeutic implications of writing and identified three texts that conveyed the ‘festering’ wounds of the Irish Civil War from alternative perspectives:

Even to-day the wounds of the Irish Civil War fester long after its dead have turned to dust or withered to nothing in their quick-lime shrouds. Its destruction was great in damage to property, in loss of life, in disillusion [...]. In the pages of Peadar O’Donnell’s *The Gates Flew Open*, in Francis Carty’s *Legion of the Rearguard*, in Patrick Mulloy’s *Jackets Green*, three Irish writers from different viewpoints have written from first-hand experience of the physical and spiritual ordeal through which a riven army and a sundered movement then passed, and few readers of their poignant pages, even if Ireland is to them only a name on a map, can escape the feeling that the deepest wounds of the Civil War were spiritual wounds that will not be healed until the last of the Civil War generation is long forgotten.<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to interrogate psychoanalytical understandings of the salutary implications of narrative in the context of the Irish Civil War. Focusing on Ryan’s selected narratives, it will consider the textualisation of these ‘spiritual wounds’ in the testimonies of Peadar O’Donnell (1893–1986), Francis Carty (1899–1972) and Patrick Mulloy (1903–1978); a prison memoir and two popular novels. The first two testimonies selected by Ryan – who was a supporter of the treaty – are written by anti-treaty republicans, the third by an officer in the Free State army. Ryan thus perceived these ‘civil war wounds’ as a collective trauma and proposed the sharing of stories to cultivate mutual understandings across treaty lines and transcend party politics.

Aside from Peadar O’Donnell’s memoir (1932), the fictionalised testimonies of Carty (1934) and Mulloy (1936) have all but eluded scholarly attention. Literary scholarship has largely focused on modernist responses to the civil war or on realist short stories of the

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<sup>8</sup> Seán O’Faoláin, *Vive Moi: An Autobiography* (Hart-Davis, 1964 [1993]), p. 146.

<sup>9</sup> Desmond Ryan, *Unique Dictator: A Study of Eamon de Valera* (A. Barker limited, 1936), p. 205.

revolution, rather than on popular novels.<sup>10</sup> The popular realism adopted by these authors also goes against the overwhelming conflation between trauma and the fragmented aesthetic of high modernism in literary trauma theory. Meanwhile, historians have been slow to incorporate literary evidence into studies of the revolutionary period.<sup>11</sup> As acts of literary witnessing, however, these narratives have particular historical value given their foregrounding of experience effaced from the official metanarrative. Moreover, the atypical modes of hybridised testimony adopted by O'Donnell, Carty and Mulloy speak to the competing compulsions that characterise posttraumatic testimonies, namely 'the urgent need to tell about traumatic past experiences and the self-protective desire to remain silent'.<sup>12</sup> This disguised divulgence was also necessary given that the taboo of mental illness threatened the idealised image of heroic masculinity central to the Irish national project.<sup>13</sup>

All three authors penned a number of accounts pertaining to the civil war, told from different vantage points – real and imagined – at various points in their lives. This shared narrative impulse speaks to Dori Laub's contention that the 'imperative to tell and to be heard can become itself an all-consuming life task'.<sup>14</sup> As Pierre Janet (1925) and many researchers and psychoanalysts have since contended, the recovery of a unified self in the aftermath of traumatic experience 'seems to require the creation of some kind of coherent narrative about the event or events that inflicted the trauma'.<sup>15</sup>

### **Spiritual Wounds?: Historicising 'trauma'**

Ryan's contention that 'the deepest wounds of the Civil War were spiritual wounds' illustrates the limited vocabulary available to articulate psychological trauma in early twentieth-century Ireland. While the term 'trauma', meaning 'wound', was initially employed

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<sup>10</sup> See Nicholas Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) (Allen does include some discussion of the novels of Mulloy and Jack Wynne); Michael L. Storey, *Representing the Troubles in Irish Short Fiction* (Catholic University of America Press, 2004); Peter Costello, *The Heart Grown Brutal: The Irish Revolution in Literature from Parnell to the Death of Yeats, 1891–1939* (Gill & Macmillan, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> An exception is Flanagan's *Remembering the Revolution*.

<sup>12</sup> Meg Jensen, *The Art and Science of Trauma and the Autobiographical: Negotiated Truths* (Springer, 2019), p. 116.

<sup>13</sup> See Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884–1938* (Springer, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Dori Laub, 'Truth and Testimony' in Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 63.

<sup>15</sup> Irene Kacandes, 'Narrative Witnessing as Memory Work: Reading Gertrude Kolmar's A Jewish Mother', in Mieke Bal, Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (eds), *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (University Press of New England, 1999), p. 55.

to describe bodily injury, psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud increasingly began to use the metaphor of the physical wound to refer to mental afflictions. The metaphor of the 'wound' arguably enabled the abstract, unknown concept of psychic injury to be conceived of as familiar. This analogy continues to dominate conceptions of trauma. For leading literary trauma theorist Cathy Caruth, trauma is 'always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available'.<sup>16</sup> The bodily wound, which is characterised by its 'delayed appearance and belated address', spills out words and blood in an attempt to convey a message: the wound metaphor is thus a double image 'signalling injury on the one hand and the gap(s) in our own lack of knowledge of psychic trauma on the other'.<sup>17</sup>

Ryan's conception of 'spiritual wounds' may have also been informed by his exposure to spiritualist philosophy (anthroposophy) as advanced by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925).<sup>18</sup> Steiner's interest in applying scientific methods to spiritual experience brought him into conversation with the emerging field of psychoanalysis. While intrigued by the ideas of Dr. Freud and Dr. Jung, he was critical of their inability or unwillingness 'to approach spiritual reality'.<sup>19</sup> This clash between the fields of psychoanalysis and spiritualism is indicative of the diversity of ideas regarding the 'architecture of the psyche' during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Jill L. Matus argues that 'secular, evolutionary and physiological theories were not always aligned and nor were they always opposed to spiritual, creationist and metaphysical explanations'.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, while Freudian beliefs resonated in Ireland through the circulation of texts such as Barbara Low's *Psycho-Analysis: A Brief Account of the Freudian Theory* (1920), mysticism, the occult and spiritualism were also highly popular among revolutionaries.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Kathryn Robson, *Writing Wounds: The Inscription of Trauma in Post-1968 French Women's Life-Writing* (Rodopi, 2004), p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Ryan's father, W. P. Ryan, took a strong interest in alternative educational theories and in the ideas of the spiritualist philosophy (anthroposophy) advanced by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925). Steiner put forward a model of psychology which would take 'into account both the soul's hidden powers and the complex connections between psychological and organic, bodily processes'. See Rudolf Steiner, May Laird-Brown (trans), *Psychoanalysis in the Light of Anthroposophy: Five Lectures* (Literary Licensing, LLC, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Rudolf Steiner, 'Psychoanalysis in the Light of Anthroposophy', delivered at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, 10 November 1917. Available at:

<https://wn.rsarchive.org/GA/GA0178/19171110p01.html>. (Accessed 10 August 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Jill L. Matus, *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Nadia Clare. Smith, *Dorothy Macardle: A Life* (Dublin: Woodfield Press, 2007), p. 57; Wendy E. Cousins, 'Ireland the Anomalous State: Paranormal Cultures and the Irish Literary and Political Revival', in Olu Jenzen and Sally R. Munt (eds), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Paranormal Cultures* (Routledge, 2016), pp 255–266.

Aside from contemporary debates, Ryan's convictions regarding the possibility of 'healing' spiritual wounds through narrative emerged from his own experience as a psychiatric casualty of war. A teacher and former pupil at Patrick Pearse's school, St. Enda's, Ryan was one of thirty students and faculty to mobilise during the 1916 Rising. He was subsequently interned in Stafford Jail, Wormwood Scrubs and Frongoch. However, far from benefiting from his time at the 'Sinn Féin' university, Ryan's internment had negative psychological effects. As Flanagan observes:

Ryan spent his days at Stafford in nearly complete isolation, broken only by meals and moments of conversation with the cleaners through the peephole. There he experienced a mental breakdown of sorts, a period described in his diary as a 'death-in-life'. Several diary entries from the period comprised nothing more than the repeated words 'Visit. Visitors. Nerves.' and 'much introspection'.<sup>22</sup>

On his return to Dublin, he was employed as a sub-editor and reporter at the *Freeman's Journal*. Although not active in the war of independence, his role as writer of the newspaper's 'blood column' involved reporting on a number of traumatic incidents, such as visiting a morgue to view the sixteen corpses following the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre at Croke Park,<sup>23</sup> and accompanying police as they surveyed the room where Sinn Féin Councillor John Lynch of Kilmallock had been executed in his nightclothes.<sup>24</sup> Dismayed by the split over the treaty, Ryan's sympathies were with the treatyites due to his belief that Pearse would have accepted any measure of Home Rule. He grew overwhelmed by the contentiousness of the civil war, left his job rather suddenly and fled to his father's house in London. He claims he was propelled to leave the *Freeman's Journal* after the newspaper published 'a bitter cartoon of de Valera and Childers'.<sup>25</sup> In his memoir, he frankly acknowledges the psychological implications of the 'crisis', and recounts that he experienced a 'minor nervous breakdown' as he was swept 'over the seas from Sion'.<sup>26</sup>

When recovering from his first 'nervous breakdown' in 1917, Ryan made a resolution to commit himself to 'one definite and absorbing aim in life': writing.<sup>27</sup> He rewrote his prison diary and circulated it confidentially among his family. This decision to share his harrowing

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<sup>22</sup> Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 168.

<sup>23</sup> Ryan, *Remembering Sion*, p. 275.

<sup>24</sup> Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> Ryan, *Remembering Sion*, p. 280.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p. 276.

<sup>27</sup> Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 170.

experience in written form was the beginning of a long career in chronicling the revolution. His first two books were biographies of Patrick Pearse (1919) and James Connolly (1924), whilst his next effort, *The Invisible Army* (1932) documented the life of Michael Collins.<sup>28</sup> However, this narrative swerved from conventional historical writing; Ryan instead adopted a blend of fiction and biography in order to revive 'the atmosphere of that very abnormal time, and yet not distort the truth'.<sup>29</sup> This fictionalised look at Collins provided a self-protective means for Ryan to address his own revolutionary experience and concomitant psychological distress. The fictitious journalist David Harding is clearly an author surrogate and the novel includes insightful portraits into the emotional toll of war. As the novel concludes, Harding finds himself at a loss, having witnessed land mines explode and colleagues meet their deaths in civil war: 'He wanted one thing only: to forget. All feeling was numbed. The beliefs of a lifetime swayed and crashed and reeled to death. Friendship had gone as the volleys of firing parties crashed and spades clanked to open gaping graves. NOTHING ON EARTH WAS WORTH IT.'<sup>30</sup>

Yet the protagonist's desire to forget is offset by the author's need to tell. If fiction opened up the possibility of self-reflection and allowed Ryan to 'banish' the 'grimmiest' of his civil war memories,<sup>31</sup> his confidence in addressing his own experience was further realised in his memoir *Remembering Sion* (1934), in which he 'coughed up a good deal, or, to use a more accurate and elegant expression, I released most of the pent-up feelings of twenty-five years'.<sup>32</sup> Despite criticism he anticipated from 'professional critics' and newspaper reviewers, Ryan remained convinced of the benefits of evoking and testifying to the revolution:

It may be asked if this evocation of the past is in any way helpful or anything short of whining and sickly sentimentality? To which it must be replied that it is one of the most useful tasks to which any Irish writer can apply himself, and, if it helps no one else, it at least helps the writer to rid his bosom of much perilous stuff.<sup>33</sup>

This idea of exorcising trauma through narrative can be traced back as far as Aristotle's theory of mythos-mimesis, though it gained added significance in early psychotherapies

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<sup>28</sup> Desmond Ryan, *The Man Called Pearse* (Maunsel and Company, Ltd., 1919); Desmond Ryan, *James Connolly: His Life, Work & Writings* (Talbot Press, 1924).

<sup>29</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 246.

<sup>30</sup> Desmond Ryan, *The Invisible Army: A Story of Michael Collins* (A. Barker, 1932), p. 228.

<sup>31</sup> Ryan, *Remembering Sion*, p. 301.

<sup>32</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 245.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*, p. 248.

founded on abreaction theory.<sup>34</sup> Abreaction theory pointed to the negative implications of keeping 'traumatic' experience out of consciousness and suggested that healing could be facilitated by expurgating suppressed memories through recovery techniques such as free association, automatic writing, suggestion or hypnosis.<sup>35</sup> This is reflected in widespread psychoanalytic concepts such as Sigmund Freud's and Josef Breuer's 'talking cure' which was a form of verbal therapy put forward in *Studien über Hysterie* [Studies in Hysteria] in 1893. Given that trauma is widely considered to be 'unassimilated' and thus returns to haunt the individual later on,<sup>36</sup> there is a general consensus among psychiatrists and literary trauma theorists that healing can begin with the transformation of the traumatic events into some sort of coherent narrative that can re-foster connections between the individual and the community. As Leigh Gilmore sums up, words provide a 'therapeutic balm' as the 'unconscious language of repetition through which trauma initially speaks (flashbacks, nightmares, emotional flooding) is replaced by a conscious language that can be repeated in structured settings'.<sup>37</sup>

In her influential study, *Shattered Subjects*, Suzette A. Henke considers whether the process of abreaction requires an analyst and locates the 'therapeutic power of psychoanalysis' in the experience of 'rememory' rather than in the patient's transference to the analyst in a clinical setting, as suggested by Freud. Following this line of inquiry, Henke coins the term 'scriptotherapy' to describe the 'the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment'.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, it may even be the case that 'writing therapy', in the form of automatic writing, preceded 'talk therapy' in early twentieth-century psychoanalysis.<sup>39</sup> Automatic writing – perhaps most studied in the case of W. B. Yeats – was practised widely in revolutionary circles and may have influenced Ryan's ideas about the uses of narrative therapy.<sup>40</sup> While 'automatic writing' primarily served as a means to access the unconscious and was often practised in social settings, it seems that writing did offer a coping mechanism of sorts for a number of revolutionaries in lieu of any type of 'talk therapy'.

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<sup>34</sup> Kearney, 'Narrating Pain', p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> Janella D. Moy, 'Reading and Writing One's Way to Wellness: The History of Bibliotherapy and Scriptotherapy', in Stephanie M. Hilger (ed.), *New Directions in Literature and Medicine Studies*, p. 21.

<sup>36</sup> See Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. xii.

<sup>39</sup> See Alexandra Bacopoulos-Viau, 'From the Writing Cure to the Talking Cure: Revisiting the French 'Discovery of the Unconscious'', *History of the Human Sciences*, 32(1), 2009, pp 41–65.

<sup>40</sup> Rosamond Jacob's documents the popular practice of automatic writing in her diary, 24 November 1919, National Library of Ireland [hereby NLI] MS, 3582/36. Available at: <http://jacobdiaries.ie/2019/11/24/week-107-24th-30th-november-1919/> (Accessed 10 August 2020).

Even though proto-cognitive behavioural therapies were advanced for the treatment of shell-shocked soldiers, there was a general distrust of psychoanalysis in Ireland, possibly due to the Catholic Church's disapproval.<sup>41</sup> Writer Samuel Beckett travelled to London for treatment in the early 1930s as he claimed that 'psychoanalysis was not allowed in Dublin at that time'.<sup>42</sup> Rosamond Jacob, who was interned during the civil war, also travelled to London for psychoanalysis to address her interpersonal relations; notably her therapy began in epistolary form.<sup>43</sup> In light of limited medical services and a general public reluctance to address the psychological consequences of the revolution, veterans often self-medicated or sought guidance through other means. Both Seosamh Mac Grianna (1900–1990) and Charles Dalton (1903–1974) seem to have had recourse to narrative as a sort of coping strategy. Mrs Margaret Green contended that her husband, Mac Grianna, who was interned as an anti-treaty prisoner in the Curragh, had 'become ill since the Civil War'.<sup>44</sup> During particularly bad bouts, he was charged with terrifying his neighbours.<sup>45</sup> He was treated in Grangegorman Mental Asylum in 1935–36, and drafted up a self-help plan at this time which consisted of 'five years' complete isolation, temperance and chastity', and included a provision to write in order to promote 'development of mind and body'.<sup>46</sup> His remarkable, highly metafictional autobiographical novel, *Dá mBíodh Ruball ar an Éan* (1940), too reflects on the cathartic benefits of writing. In the opening chapter, the first-person narrator contends that he is writing 'go dóchasach' as writing a book is 'deas don chroí ag an duine'.<sup>47</sup> Mac Grianna's condition improved little, however. The novel went unfinished and was published in incomplete form with the concluding line, 'Thráigh an tobar sa tsamhradh, 1935. Ní sgríobhfaidh mé níos mó. Rinne mé mo dhícheall, agus is cuma liom'.<sup>48</sup> Mac Grianna spent much of his later life in St. Conall's Hospital in Letterkenny.

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<sup>41</sup> See Brendan Kelly, *Hearing Voices: The History of Psychiatry in Ireland* (Irish Academic Press, 2016), p. 143.

<sup>42</sup> James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 167.

<sup>43</sup> Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: Third Person Singular* (UCD Press, 2010), location 5006 [Kindle edition].

<sup>44</sup> *Evening Herald*, 5 December 1941, p. 1. Cited in Brian Ó Conchubhair, 'Seosamh Mac Grianna: A Bhealach Féin', in John Walsh and Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh (eds), *Ag Siúl an Bhealaigh Mhóir: Aistí in Ómós don Ollamh Nollaig Mac Congáil* (LeabhairCOMHAR, 2016), pp 138–139.

<sup>45</sup> As one neighbour testified, '[Prof. Green] placed against the partition wall and climbed up to look through the glass portion, from which position he made faces at her and uttered loud groaning noises'. *Evening Herald*, 5 December 1941, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> 'The Papers of Seosamh Mac Grianna', James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway, G42/ 1–7. Cited in Fionntán De Brun, *Seosamh Mac Grianna: An Mhéin Rúin* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar Tta, 2002). See also Pól Ó Múirí, *A Flight from Shadow: The Life & Works of Seosamh Mac Grianna* (Belfast: Lagan Press, 1999); Pól Ó Muirí, *Seosamh Mac Grianna: Míreanna Saoil* (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> 'hopefully', 'good for a person's heart'. Seosamh Mac Grianna, *Dá mBíodh Ruball Ar an Éan* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1940), p. 232; p. 231.

<sup>48</sup> 'The well dried up in summer 1935. I will not write anymore. I did my very best, and I don't care', *ibid*, p. 89.

Dalton, who was a member of Michael Collins' squad and later an officer in the Free State army, was also treated in Grangegorman. His fellow squad member, Frank Saurin, wrote in support of Dalton's claim for a disability pension and outlined that Dalton suffered from many of the symptoms later associated with PTSD:

He became obsessed with the idea that his house was surrounded by men out to 'get him'. He bolted and locked all his doors and went as far as to climb the stairs on his hands and knees, thereby avoiding throwing his shadow on a drawn blind so that he would not present a target to his imaginary potential executioners.<sup>49</sup>

By 1941, Dalton had been diagnosed by various consultants with 'mixed psychosis', 'mental aberration' and '100% delusional insanity'; the Pension Board, although willing to compensate Dalton for an injury sustained to his hand, were reluctant to address the 'disease' aspect of his disability. According to his daughter, Carol Mullan, Dalton's memoir, *With the Dublin Brigade* (1929) was 'a form of therapy, really' for her father.<sup>50</sup> Although the memoir only covers the period until the Truce and omits Dalton's more contentious civil war activities<sup>51</sup>, it nevertheless includes remarkably frank acknowledgements of his emotional strain during IRA activities. Yet while Ó Grianna's and Dalton's writing may have been motivated by a therapeutic objective, their extreme cases underline the dangers of touting writing as a cure.

## **Ridding Ourselves of the Past: The Healing Potential of Narrative**

Ryan acknowledged the complexities of remembering and proposed that the healing potential of narrative was contingent upon a certain means of articulation; it was possible, not through 'harping or brooding on the past' (of which politicians were guilty), but through artistically 'ridding ourselves of the past, blowing off the worst and retaining the best'.<sup>52</sup> This

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<sup>49</sup> Letter from Frank Saurin to Commandant P. J. Paul, Department of Defence, 19 June 1941, Charlie Dalton, Military Service Pension Collection, 24SP1153.

<sup>50</sup> Carol Mullan, Interview, 'The 1916 Rising Oral History Collections', *Irish Life & Lore*. Available at: <https://www.irishlifeandlore.com>.

<sup>51</sup> For example, Dalton is implicated in the killing of three unarmed teenagers on the anti-treaty side in October 1922. See John Dorney, 'New evidence on a disturbing killing during the Irish Civil War', *The Irish Story*, 22 November 2017. Available at: <https://www.theirishstory.com/2017/11/22/revisiting-the-red-cow-murders-october-7-1922/#.X0-jhC2ZOCU> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>52</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 248.

distinction further illustrates his engagement with psychoanalysis and echoes the concepts of 'acting-out' and 'working through' expressed by Sigmund Freud in his 1914 essay 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through'.<sup>53</sup> These two interconnected modes of coming to terms with traumatic experience have gained prominence in more recent trauma studies which foreground resilience and recovery in the aftermath of trauma, in contrast to the emphasis on the powerlessness of trauma 'victims' often advanced in 'Caruthian' trauma theory. As intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra posits, posttraumatic 'acting out' describes the condition of being 'haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes – scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop'.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile 'working through' indicates an 'articulatory practice: to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transference relations in general), one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future'.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Ryan did not envision this process of 'ridding ourselves of the past' in terms of a straightforward, cause-effect relationship between traumatic experience and narrative. Although he felt 'whole and sane' after exorcising his traumatic memories in *Remembering Sion*, he admitted the incompleteness of his project, that 'all the best bits' were left out. Writing may have temporarily satisfied the 'imperative to tell', but he felt bound to 'always be *Still Remembering Sion*' (my emphasis).<sup>56</sup>

For Ryan, writers, rather than public figures, were particularly privileged in their ability to blow off steam and, thus, had a moral and ethical duty to challenge the misuse of civil war memory at an official level and, by 'setting down everything honestly and truthfully', ensure that succeeding generations were not 'poisoned with the civil war feuds' nourished by party politics.<sup>57</sup> His selection of three highly literary testimonies as examples of such writings suggest that less conventional narratives were particularly apt given the political taboo, practical risks, and libel fears provoked by writing about the civil war. Hybridised forms of testimony arguably provided a more concealed 'self-protective' means to articulate traumatic

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<sup>53</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII* (1911–1913), pp 145–156.

<sup>54</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 21.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>56</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 252.

<sup>57</sup> Draft Desmond Ryan to Mrs Gwynn, 21 August 1934, Desmond Ryan Papers, UCD LA10/P/60. Cited in Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 186.

experience given the polemic nature of writing accounts of trauma which challenged official state memory making (or forgetting).

Ryan included Carty and Mulloy's novels in his bibliography for his historical biography of Éamon de Valera – *The Unique Dictator*. Yet neither of these fictionalised testimonies have been the subject of historical scrutiny. This is despite Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh's call for historians to pay 'careful attention to a wide range of sources and texts of a kind that many [...] are not accustomed to handling'<sup>58</sup> and Tom Dunne's contention that, '[i]f all history is a form of fiction, so too, all literary fictions are a form of history and constitute indispensable historical evidence'.<sup>59</sup> Literary scholars, on the other hand, have been slow to consider middlebrow fiction or non-modernist semi-autobiographical narratives. Gerardine Meaney attributes the relative neglect of Rosamund Jacob's revolutionary novel, *The Troubled House* to the difficulty of categorising the work, given her literary style is 'neither high modernism nor depressed realism'.<sup>60</sup> While women's popular fiction is gradually being recuperated by feminist literary scholars (discussed in the Chapter Three), men's middlebrow novels have arguably been even more overlooked. Popular novels were also sidelined from the literary canon of the revolution; both Seán O'Faoláin and Frank O'Connor 'thought that the dismal state of Irish society encouraged the short story writer but discouraged the novelist'.<sup>61</sup>

The attraction of hybridised fictionalised testimonies is indicative of wider European literary trends at the fin de siècle, as 'autobiography [...] gets displaced towards fiction'.<sup>62</sup> By the 1916 Rising, Ronan Crowley observes that 'novels whose characters were based on real people were [...] on the verge of veritable explosion'.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, he contends that this 'fugitive genre' 'remains largely unexplored and underexamined'.<sup>64</sup> These novels had come to dominate popular commemoration of the revolution. By 1934 it was observed that 'the latest generation of Irish writers appears to have turned from plays to novels as a vehicle for

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<sup>58</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Irish Historical Revisionism', in Ciarán Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism, 1938–1994* (Irish Academic Press, 1994), p. 324.

<sup>59</sup> Tom Dunne, 'A Polemical Introduction: Literature, Literary Theory and the Historian', in Tom Dunne and Charles Doherty (eds), *The Writer as Witness: Literature as Historical Evidence: Papers Read before the Irish Conference of Historians, Held at University College, Cork, 23-26 May 1985* (Cork University Press, 1987), p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Gerardine Meaney, 'Rosamond Jacob and the Hidden Histories of Irish Writing', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 15, no. 4 (2011), pp 70–74.

<sup>61</sup> John Wilson Foster, 'The Irish Renaissance, 1890–1940: prose in English', in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary (eds), *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature 2 Volume Hardback Set: Vol 1–2* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 99.

<sup>62</sup> Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Ronan Crowley, 'Revivalism à Clef, Revivalism sans Clef: Writing the Renaissance in James Stephens, Brinsley MacNamara, and Eimar O'Duffy', *New Hibernia Review* 23, no. 3 (2019), pp 129–44.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*, p. 130.

interpreting the events in which it has been engaged'.<sup>65</sup> The editor of Talbot Press noted that same year that there 'have been many books published dealing with the historical aspect of the period 1916–1924, and, of course, more novels'.<sup>66</sup>

O'Donnell, Carty and Mulloy all resorted to fictional means of articulation while simultaneously defending the truthfulness of their accounts. There is a longstanding belief that literary testimonies are particularly privileged forms in accommodating the competing compulsions at the core of the 'crisis of representation' evoked by traumatic experience. This belief that fictional or imaginary narratives are apt to address traumatic subject matter can be traced back to Freudian theories of abreaction which promoted the symbolic investment of literary narrative. For LaCapra, traumatic memory may involve 'distortion, disguise, and other permutations relating to processes of imaginative transformation and narrative shaping perhaps as well as repression, denial, dissociation, and foreclosure'.<sup>67</sup> As such, Caruth contends that trauma must 'be spoken in a language that is always somehow literary' and ponders 'might the very fictional power of texts be, not a hindrance to, but a means of gaining access to their referential force?'.<sup>68</sup>

Ryan certainly found comfort under the imaginative and self-protective veil of fiction. In *Invisible Army*, he claimed he employed fiction and a hundred swear words 'to draw the crowd' who would be uninterested in 'straightforward historical works or parish magazine novelettes'.<sup>69</sup> While reviewers commented that the text was 'difficult to classify',<sup>70</sup> his 'blend of biography, novel, and history' was generally accepted.<sup>71</sup> As a reviewer in the *Irish Book Lover* noted, '[t]he fictional style of the narrative breathes vital colour into it, and so transcends biography'.<sup>72</sup> His subsequent memoir was also highly literary and self-consciously experimented with Joycean fragmented narrative and stream-of-consciousness to evoke the complex circumstances of the revolutionary period. As he recalls:

... we changed the style to suit the side; and, in that, brazenly and openly and with deep gratitude, took several leaves from the book of Mr James Joyce, who gave us a title and a

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<sup>65</sup> 'Two Rising Catholic Novelists', *Universe*, 7 September 1934.

<sup>66</sup> Letter to Mr. Hern Paul Hempel, 20 November 1934. National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager's Correspondence, 1048/1/134.

<sup>67</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 88.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5; Caruth cited in Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 246.

<sup>70</sup> 'The War of Irish Freedom: A Review of a Book of the Week', *The Irish Press*, 9 September 1932.

<sup>71</sup> Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 185.

<sup>72</sup> D. B., 'Review of Desmond Ryan's *The Invisible Army: A Story of Michael Collins*', *The Irish Book Lover*, Vol. XX, 1932, p. 118.

chapter; in that used flowery journalism, swear words, slang, and threw all commas, semi-colons, colons, dashes and dots and grammar and sense and all dessicated word-polishing and mincing phraseology and restraint itself to the very devil when it suited us.<sup>73</sup>

Francis Stuart (1902–2000) also experimented with fictional and autobiographical structures. He had been a Curragh internee and claimed that those days 'were the worst of my life, the most vicious. Nothing is worse than civil war'.<sup>74</sup> Like Ryan, he inscribed aspects of his revolutionary experience into two early novels, *Pigeon Irish* (1932) and *The Coloured Dome* (1932).<sup>75</sup> In his 1934 autobiography *Things to Live For: Notes for an Autobiography*, he claimed that fiction had provided him with a more comfortable medium for self-expression:

I've written novels because until now that form has seemed the one best suited in which to express myself. Only in the drama of living can my ideas take shape. Only by depicting the battle can I show what I have dreamed of as the triumph of defeat.<sup>76</sup>

Even in the more conventional form of autobiography, Stuart's writing style changed in his treatment of the civil war. Eve Patten observes that 'as Stuart's focus shifts to the traumatic experiences of an adult world, specifically his internment and hunger-strike during the civil war, he expresses his need to shape events according to what he identifies as the fundamental terms of all narrative: battle, quest, romance and sacrifice'.<sup>77</sup> Stuart found too much 'left unfinished' in the memoir, however, and returned to his civil war experience in his 'structurally and stylistically idiosyncratic' autobiographical novel *Black List, Section H* (1971).<sup>78</sup> For Anna McCartney, Stuart's writing was part of a process of 'painful self-analysis' to work through his experience.<sup>79</sup>

Much attention has been afforded to the deployment of modernist or avant garde narrative forms in order to emphasis the fragmentary, disruptive, and temporally disjointed

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<sup>73</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 245.

<sup>74</sup> Eileen Battersby, 'Nothing but Doubts', *The Irish Times*, 14 November 1996.

<sup>75</sup> Francis Stuart, *Pigeon Irish* (Macmillan, 1932); Francis Stuart, *The Coloured Dome* (V. Gollancz, Limited, 1932).

<sup>76</sup> Francis Stuart, *Things to Live for: Notes for an Autobiography* (Macmillan, 1935), p. 96.

<sup>77</sup> Eve Patten, 'Autobiography and the Modern Irish Novel', in Liam Harte (ed.), *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society* (Springer, 2007), p. 59.

<sup>78</sup> Francis Stuart, *Black List, Section H*. (Southern Illinois University Press, 1971); Harte, *Modern Irish Autobiography*, p. 60.

<sup>79</sup> Anne McCartney, *Francis Stuart: Face to Face, a Critical Study* (Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University, 2000), p. 46.

nature of traumatic experience.<sup>80</sup> Writing of testimonies of male combatants from the First World War, Margaret Higonnet notes that:

PTSD has offered literary critics a vocabulary to describe the symptoms of soldiers' mental disturbances that may figure in memoirs and other autobiographical accounts: nonsequential memory, flashbacks, nightmares, and mutism or fragmented language. Those symptoms bear a suggestive resemblance to certain features of modernist experiment: decentering of the subject, montage, ellipses or gaps in narrative, and startlingly vivid images. This similarity— or, some would argue, connection— between a set of medical symptoms among veterans and a set of stylistic features in narrative has fostered a masculine canon of modernism.<sup>81</sup>

While such modernist techniques are evident in a number of narratives which address the complexities of the revolutionary period – such as in the writings of Ernie O'Malley, Elizabeth Bowen and Kathleen Coyle – the privileging of high modernist techniques that mimic the symptomology of trauma in literary studies has more recently come under scrutiny. Roger Luckhurst calls for equal consideration of high, middle and low forms of traumatic representation – even safely non-experimental texts – given that, 'if trauma is a crisis in representation, then this generates narrative *possibility* just as much as *impossibility*, a compulsive outpouring of attempts to formulate narrative knowledge'.<sup>82</sup> Postcolonial scholars have voiced their concerns about equating 'serious' and 'authentic' trauma literature with disjointed language, as such analogies are 'blind to the cultural contexts in which practices of representation and commemoration are produced and enacted'.<sup>83</sup> Craps argues that a 'no-frills, realist aesthetic' emerges in political trauma testimonies where 'the overriding concern is to get the message across and to mobilize'.<sup>84</sup> The emphasis on aporia also goes against the idea of narrative repair if the healing potential of traumatic iteration is connected to shareability and availability for consumption by others.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The deconstruction school of literary trauma theory has largely focused on narratives that mimetically reproduce the effects of trauma. Anne Whitehead's influential book *Trauma Fiction*, for example, considers 'mimicking' strategies employed by authors to reflect the forms and symptoms of trauma; in particular she emphasises 'intertextuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice.' Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction*, p. 84.

<sup>81</sup> Margaret R. Higonnet, 'Authenticity and Art in Trauma Narratives of World War I', *Modernism/Modernity* 9, no. 1 (January 2002), pp 91–107.

<sup>82</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Routledge, 2013), p. 83.

<sup>83</sup> Jill Bennet and Roseanne Kennedy, cited in Hamish Dalley, 'The Question of "Solidarity" in Postcolonial Trauma Fiction: Beyond the Recognition Principle', *Humanities* 4, no. 3 (September 2015), pp 369–92.

<sup>84</sup> Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (Springer, 2012), p. 42.

<sup>85</sup> Onega, 'Affective Knowledge, Self-Awareness', p. 84.

While some writers appropriated modernist forms, most testimonial literature of the Irish revolution in the 1930s employed realism, under the influence, perhaps, of popular English, French and German war novels.<sup>86</sup> Newspaper advertisements likened Ryan's *Invisible Army* to Erich Maria Remarque's realistic autobiographical novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*.<sup>87</sup> Even though Irish writers of the 1930s have been accused of having a limited awareness of 'the Revival's formal originality or of modernism's revolution of the world',<sup>88</sup> Michael Rothberg contends that realism was far from a conservative mode; realistic depiction in the 1930s could represent 'a revolutionary force that was a natural correlative of proletarian struggle', while during the Second World War, 'a defense of realism amounted to a much-needed affirmation of civilisation in the face of barbarism'.<sup>89</sup> Mark Quigley also contends that Ó Faoláin's espousal of realism was far from a backwards project: 'rather than a naïve aesthetic that would seem to arise in ignorance of the seismic artistic and intellectual shifts that had preceded it, O'Faoláin's postcolonial realism constitutes at once a critique of mainline modernism and an alternative late-modernist practice'.<sup>90</sup>

Aside from personal preference and the popularity of autofictional narratives, testimonies which evoked generic dissonance could also provide shelter from criticism. For Anne Rigney, 'the freedoms offered by fictional genres and literary modes of expression may simply provide the only forum available for recalling certain experience that are difficult to bring into the realm of public remembrance or that are simply too difficult to articulate in any other way'.<sup>91</sup> Gilmore's *Limits of Autobiography* highlights that fears about public responses and litigations push authors 'away from recognizably autobiographical forms' towards the liminal spaces between fiction and autobiography, particularly in writing trauma.<sup>92</sup> James J. Comerford outlines in his self-published tome, *My Kilkenny I.R.A. Days 1916–1922* (1980), that his colleagues were fearful of writing memoirs because of the delicate nature of pre- and post-Truce service:

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<sup>86</sup> 'The War of Irish Freedom: A Review of a Book of the Week', *The Irish Press*, 9 September 1932, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> *Evening Echo*, 16 September 1932, p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Terence Brown, *The Literature of Ireland: Culture and Criticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 99.

<sup>89</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 100.

<sup>90</sup> Mark Quigley, *Empire's Wake: Postcolonial Irish Writing and the Politics of Modern Literary Form: Postcolonial Irish Writing and the Politics of Modern Literary Form* (Fordham Univ Press, 2013), p. 68.

<sup>91</sup> Ann Rigney, 'The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts between Monumentality and Morphing', *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, 2008, p. 347.

<sup>92</sup> Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 7.

I was told how in many cases jealousies arose over the books – because the names of some men who legitimately had pre-Truce IRA service and should be in the story were omitted inadvertently, and, likewise, because the names of some men were included, inadvertently, even though they had no pre-Truce records. As a result of such errors, writers of these books, together with their friends, were harshly criticised and in fact sometimes actually harassed.<sup>93</sup>

Memoirists frequently faced libel cases and official censure. Dalton's *With The Dublin Brigade* was brought up in the House of Lords by Lord Banbury Of Southam who opposed Dalton's account of the killings of Bloody Sunday and questioned 'whether it is advisable that a book of this sort should be circulated'.<sup>94</sup> Ernie O'Malley lost a libel case initiated by Joseph O'Doherty who protested against O'Malley's claim that he had backed down from a raid due to the fact that he was married.<sup>95</sup> Cases like these may explain why O'Malley's civil war memoir was published after his death (with many names omitted in the first edition). These cases also resulted in disclaimers being placed at the beginning of memoirs and fictional accounts, such as Mulloy's ambiguous note that 'All the names mentioned in this story are names of purely fictitious persons'.<sup>96</sup> One exception was the disclaimer in Francis Plunkett's 1935 novel *As a Fool* in which the novelist claimed that he had no intention to 'fictionalise real people'.<sup>97</sup> This bold move backfired as Plunkett's London publishers Wishart & Co. landed themselves in court for defamation against Brigade General F. P. Crozier, Auxiliary Division of the Royal Irish Constabulary and author of *The Men I Killed* (1937).<sup>98</sup>

Even testimonial endeavours under the camouflage of fiction did not guarantee authorial freedom or possible 'unburdening'. Accounts of the revolutionary period came under deep scrutiny and had to convince a knowledgeable readership who had lived through the period. Critical reviews and publishing houses emphasised authenticity even in fictional accounts. The reading public too scrutinised novels and memoirs alike; they wrote corrections

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<sup>93</sup> James J. Comerford, *My Kilkenny Days: 1916–22* (Dinan Pub. Co., 1980), p. 929.

<sup>94</sup> Lord Banbury, 'With The Dublin Brigade (1917–1921)', House of Lords, volume 80 cc1036-44, 6 May 1931. Available at: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1931/may/06/with-the-dublin-brigade-1917-1921> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>95</sup> Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War*, p. 199.

<sup>96</sup> Patrick Mulloy, *Jackets Green* (Grayson & Grayson, 1936), p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> The biographical sketch of the author on the inside cover of the novel notes that: 'Francis Plunkett claims to have graduated as a writer from the famous Dublin academic institution, Mountjoy Prison, where he spent some time on account of his political activities. It is, no doubt, this training which enables him to write so convincingly in the more adventurous sections of this book; and that he is no less a literary craftsman than an expert of life in the raw is shown by his ability to evoke with equal facility a sardonic or an idyllic mood.' Francis Plunkett, *As the Fool* (Wishart, 1935).

<sup>98</sup> See *The All England Law Reports: (Incorporating the Law Times Reports and the Law Journal Reports) of Cases Decided in the House of Lords, the Privy Council, All Divisions of the Supreme Court, and Courts of Special Jurisdiction* (Butterworth., 1936), p. 3.

into the margins, eager to point out any historical inaccuracies.<sup>99</sup> Despite disclaimers that insisted that 'all persons fictitious', readers actively sought to identify characters. A reviewer of Eimar O'Duffy's novel *Miss Rudd and Some Lovers* (1924) was confident that 'his Irish, or at any rate his Dublin, readers will have no difficulty in recognising the distinguishing marks of some more or less public characters'.<sup>100</sup> Fiction that failed to meet the criteria of empirical verifiability was not readily entertained and reviewers and readers were less drawn to accounts of the revolution by 'outsiders'. English-born and US-based novelist Kathleen Pawle was harshly criticised for her 1936 novel, *We In Captivity*, set during the Easter Rising; one reviewer contended she had 'under all the rational rules, no business to set up to interpret Ireland'.<sup>101</sup> Dublin author J. S. Collis found that his semi-autobiographical novel *The Sounding Cataract* (1936) also met censure. As a reviewer in the *Irish Independent* wrote, Collis 'may know the details of the Civil War, but he is quite unable to capture its atmosphere. It might be a civil war in China or Peru for all the relation it bears to the Ireland of 1922'.<sup>102</sup> Liverpool-born John Brophy's 1933 novel *The Rocky Road* was also dismissed outright, both for its 'too-incredible' and 'unnecessary' seduction scene, and because the author did 'not know his Dublin of this particular period'.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, readers' interactions with such testimonies are integral to understanding their contribution to a counter-memory of the civil war in the shadow of state-promoted 'amnesia'. Testimony is an interpersonal activity; for Caruth, trauma is more a 'problem of address' than a 'crisis of representation'.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, Ryan was compelled to share his private stories with a public reading audience. He notes that he resisted the temptation to leave his writings stashed away in 'the bottom drawer of our desk' and instead was compelled to 'throw the manuscript at the public'.<sup>105</sup>

Testimonies to trauma often evoke 'vicarious' reactions which, Ann E. Kaplan contends, prove 'especially powerful when a viewer has had first-hand traumas that are similar to those being portrayed'.<sup>106</sup> Given the appetite for, and sales of, such revolutionary narratives,

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<sup>99</sup> William O'Brien's copy of Dalton's *With The Dublin Brigade*, which was donated to the NLI in 1968, is just one example. NLI AA15133.

<sup>100</sup> W. D., review of *Review of Miss Rudd and Some Lovers*, by Eimar O'Duffy, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 13, no. 50 (1924), pp 332–34.

<sup>101</sup> *The Charlotte News*, 22 March 1936.

<sup>102</sup> *Irish Independent*, 12 May 1936, p. 4.

<sup>103</sup> Ní M., M. 'Review of John Brophy's *The Rocky Road*', *Irish Book Lover*, Vol. XXI, Jan/Feb 1933, p. 21.

<sup>104</sup> Cathy Caruth, 'Trauma, Time and Address', in Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (Milton, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), p. 84.

<sup>105</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 252.

<sup>106</sup> E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 90

could it be that the compulsion to write may, for some, have manifested itself through a compulsion to revisit the period through the writing of others?

Irish nationalist reviewers were concerned about the consumption of popular revolutionary narratives outside of Ireland, as many Irish-authored books were still published in London in the post-independence period. Aodh de Blácam lamented the popularity of formulaic revolutionary autofictional narratives which were often published in Britain: 'Every one of these books is put forth with much the same advertisement, that it 'Tells the Truth about the Irish revolution for the First Time'.<sup>107</sup> However, the high demand for revolutionary narratives in England and the United States may reflect the high rates of post-war emigration. Shirley Quill recounts in her memoir of her husband, trade union leader Mike Quill (and long-time New York resident), that she could not hamper his desire to textually revisit his revolutionary days:

'Darling, for you the Civil War is still an open wound. If you don't stop reading this stuff, it will never heal.'

'You're right,' he replied quietly, 'but I can't help it. I can't stop reading.'<sup>108</sup>

Having established contemporary (proto)psychoanalytic beliefs about the possibility of narrative catharsis and the dominance of testimonial autofictions, the following sections of this chapter will focus on the three testimonies identified by Ryan. I will first consider Peadar O'Donnell's intertextual, palimpsestic layering of fiction and history and explore how his prison testimonies tap into a larger republican 'founding trauma' of triumphant defeat, yet also dwell on individual, collective, and even international war traumas. The destabilisation of the genres of fiction and historical narrative will then be examined in Carty's *Legion of the Rearguard*, a novel which, despite its apparent conformity, offers an imaginative, solemn alternative to the teleological discourse of revolutionary commemoration; in contrast to official, often glorified memory, his novel highlights the psychological devastation to community and family life in wartime. Patrick Mulloy adopted grisly realism in *Jackets Green* to bear witness to the brutality of wartime violence, only to find that his testimony was too unvarnished to please literary reviewers or the Censorship Board. Despite a tendency to apoliticise and deshistoricise trauma in much dominant literary trauma studies, this chapter will

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<sup>107</sup> A de B. 'As Others Wish to See Us', *Irish Press*, 15 September 1935, p. 6.

<sup>108</sup> Shirley Quill, *Mike Quill, Himself: A Memoir* (Devin-Adair, 1985), p. 221.

consider how cultural and political factors dictated the reception of civil war testimonies. Moreover, the political allegiances underpinning these testimonies, and their 'confirming' target audiences, shaped not only the texts' reception, they also determined the narrative templates adopted given that 'individuals tell their life stories by borrowing from and inventing upon models of life narratives that are culturally available to them'.<sup>109</sup>

### **Peadar O'Donnell's *The Gates Flew Open*: The Triumphant Trauma of Defeat?**

In light of the fact that politicians 'show no sign of ever really blowing off steam', Ryan called on writers to set 'down everything honestly and truthfully, even shocking themselves and all Ireland and all the world in the process'.<sup>110</sup> This 'shock' he identified first with James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) which 'left the most eloquent prologue to the Irish revolution ever written', and second with Peadar O'Donnell's *The Gates Flew Open* (1932). According to Ryan, '[w]hen Peadar O'Donnell wrote *The Gates Flew Open*, even if his gates hurled themselves against just and unjust, he told us what the jails had been thinking and left a picture of the Civil War which probably did something to deflate the blood feuds and passions of that time'.<sup>111</sup>

Published in early 1932, O'Donnell's retrospective prison memoir was one of the first full-length published accounts detailing the conditions of some 12,000 anti-treaty prisoners interned between 1922 and 1924.<sup>112</sup> Ryan's belief that O'Donnell's eclectic memoir aided in easing tensions was not shared by contemporary reviewers, who deemed it a 'vulgar book [...] distinguished by its unreasoning bitterness',<sup>113</sup> that was 'disappointing' and 'too full of personal animosities'<sup>114</sup>. By this time, O'Donnell had published four novels to significant

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<sup>109</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 157.

<sup>110</sup> Ryan, 'Still Remembering Sion', p. 249.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>112</sup> Other testimonies which document civil war imprisonment include, Margaret Buckley's *The Jangle of the Keys* (1938), Séamus O'Connor's *Tomorrow Was Another Day: Irreverent Memories of an Irish Rebel Schoolmaster* (1970), Ernie O'Malley's *A Singing Flame* (1978). Furthermore, a number of unpublished civil war prison diaries have been made available in more recent years, such as Joseph Campbell's *As I was among the Captives: Joseph Campbell's Prison Diary, 1922* and Seán a' Chóta's *Dialann Phríósúin*. Two further overlooked prison accounts are those of Frank Gallagher and Pádraig Hogan, published in *Éire* and *Sinn Féin* (1924) and in *The Methodist Magazine* (1927) respectively.

<sup>113</sup> P. de. B., 'The Gates Flew Open: A Bitter, Vulgar Book', *Irish Independent*, 1 February 1932, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> *The Guardian*, 9 February 1932, p 5.

praise, *Storm: A Story of the Irish War* (1925), *Islanders* (1928), *Adriagoole* (1929) and *The Knife* (1930). However, the political undertones of *The Gates Flew Open* were widely considered inimical to his literary reputation. One reviewer took issue with the 'gossipy and slovenly' style and declared that 'Peadar, who now has five books in his name, should be growing up'.<sup>115</sup> O'Donnell did not deny that the memoir was 'bitter and vulgar'. In fact, he claimed that 'therein lies its faithfulness to the inflamed spirits of the jails'.<sup>116</sup> For O'Donnell, there was 'nothing wrong with an artist truthfully reflecting his experiences'.<sup>117</sup> His memoir was thus driven by a truth-telling motive that he did not consider to be at odds with his creative, artistic practice. Indeed, *The Gates Flew Open* contains highly intertextual testimony that draws attention to the slippages between fact and fiction, challenging thus what constitutes historical evidence and undercutting the idea of a singular, definitive historical narrative. O'Donnell's retelling too speaks to the difficulty of successfully conveying trauma experience, and the tension between the drive to testify and the need to conceal.<sup>118</sup>

Literary appraisals of O'Donnell's early novels *Islanders* and *Adriagoole* have often focused on his naturalist treatment of rural Irish life. However, as Donal Ó Drisceoil forcefully argues, O'Donnell's stark depictions of rural economic precarity were tied to his political aims, specifically his campaign against the payment of land annuities to the British state in the 1920s.<sup>119</sup> *The Gates Flew Open* is similarly motivated by a highly political testimonial aim. A native of Meenmore, Co. Donegal, O'Donnell was one of the most active IRA officers in the Northern Divisions during the war of independence. Seeing the Anglo-Irish treaty as a sell out by the middle-class leaders and Catholic hierarchy, he joined the anti-treaty side and was a member of the Four Courts garrison. O'Donnell was arrested in the first month of the war and was interned until his escape in March or April 1924. During this time, he was held in Mountjoy, Kilmainham and the Curragh camp, and also spent three months in solitary confinement in Finner camp, Co. Donegal, under threat of execution. As much as dwelling on his own experience, O'Donnell places himself as a 'moral witness' in *The Gates Flew Open* who speaks on the behalf of the 'minds that were bruised in the prisons of 1922'.<sup>120</sup> He deems

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<sup>115</sup> Colm, 'Review of Peadar O'Donnell's *The Gates Flew Open*', *Irish Book Lover*, Vol. XX, March-April, 1932, p. 46.

<sup>116</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, 'To the editor', *Irish Independent*, 6 February 1932, p. 10.

<sup>117</sup> *The Kerryman*, 11 June 1932, p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 78.

<sup>119</sup> Dónal Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Cork University Press, 2001); Donal Ó. Drisceoil, "'My Pen Is Just a Weapon': Politics, History and the Fiction of Peadar O'Donnell", *The Irish Review*, no. 30 (2003), pp 62–70.

<sup>120</sup> Avishai Margalit defines 'moral witness' as a witness who has witnessed 'the combination of evil and the suffering it produces' and whose testimony has a 'moral purpose'. Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Harvard University Press, 2002), pp 148–151.

this particularly necessary given that many of the prisoners 'tell stories so brilliantly', yet 'so few write'.<sup>121</sup> This aim to present his experience as representative is exemplified through the use of the first-person plural pronoun 'we' throughout. In particular, the memoir is a homage to his fellow republican prisoners – Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey, Dick Barrett and Rory O'Connor – who were executed in December 1922 as a reprisal for the assassination of Free State TD Seán Hayes.

In its testimonial aim to speak for a silenced community and its honouring of the 'true witnesses' of the republican dead, O'Donnell's memoir taps into a long legacy of republican jail writing which highlighted the mistreatment of Irish prisoners in the British prison system. These writings often casted suffering in a redemptive lens, such as John Mitchel's *Jail Journal* (1854), Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's *My Years in English Jails* (1874), Michael Davitt's *Leaves from a Prison Diary* (1885) and Thomas Clarke's *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life* (1922). These prison testimonies can be understood as extensions of the daily acts of resistance communally performed by republican prisoners, as they flouted prison rules, wrecked cells, branded walls with graffiti, attempted escapes and engaged in hunger strikes for better conditions, privileges or release.<sup>122</sup> O'Donnell's memoir is thus indebted to an established republican narrative of trauma in which memory of defeat 'is presented as a step toward an inevitable triumph of national liberation'.<sup>123</sup> The memory of republican martyrs, such as Wolfe Tone, is evoked, while O'Donnell can console himself as he awaits court-martial in the knowledge that his death continued a 'fine old Imperial custom' as 'many O'Donnells before me had been hostages in the hands of the garrison'.<sup>124</sup> This model of redemptive republican trauma can be described as a type of 'founding trauma'; according to LaCapra 'founding traumas' are mythologizing trauma narratives 'that paradoxically become the valorized or intensely cathected basis of identity for an individual or a group'.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open* (J. Cape, 1932), p. 195.

<sup>122</sup> See Laura McAtackney, 'Gender, Incarceration and Power Relations during the Irish Civil War (1922–1923)', in Victoria Sanford, Katerina Stefatos, and Cecilia M. Salvi (eds), *Gender Violence in Peace and War: States of Complicity* (Rutgers University Press, 2016), pp 47–64.

<sup>123</sup> Guy Beiner, 'Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland', *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007), p. 375.

<sup>124</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 135.

<sup>125</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 23.

### Intertextual Testimony in *The Knife*

However, the metafictionality of O'Donnell's testimony unsettles such a sturdy singular narrative of redemptive republican trauma. Indeed, his 'imperative to tell' about his civil war internment first found a home in his fiction. The final section of his novel, *The Knife* (1930), catalogues civil war prison conditions and pre-empts many scenes later evoked in *The Gates Flew Open* (1932) – most significantly, the contentious clashes between the prisoners and clergy. *The Gates Flew Open* thus exists in intertextual dialogue with *The Knife*, as O'Donnell draws the reader of the memoir toward its literary precedent, 'I went amid jail scenes with a soft light in *The Knife* and they were very angry'.<sup>126</sup> Both texts resist generic categorisation: literary critic Johann A. Norstedt is ambivalent about the merits of the final section of *The Knife* as, 'it is almost as though one is reading somebody's jail journal (O'Donnell's?), not the novel which began with Catholics and Protestants fighting over land in rural Donegal'.<sup>127</sup> Meanwhile, *The Gates Flew Open* has often been mistaken for a jail diary and is considered to be 'too rough and unpolished [...] to qualify it as autobiography in the formal tradition of Yeats, Moore, and O'Casey'.<sup>128</sup> O'Donnell thus actively destabilises the genres of the novel and autobiography. As Rothberg outlines, this 'tension between the authenticity and the artifice' in testimonial literature 'reproduces the lack of immediate correspondence between history, experience, and representation and bears witness to their mutual interaction'.<sup>129</sup>

If O'Donnell's rural novels aimed to shock through their stark depictions of poverty and economic precarity, the descriptions of prison life in *The Knife* were equally provocative. The jail section of the novel opens with an account of the highly contentious torture methods practised against republican prisoners, as the novel's eponymous protagonist is subject to a type of mock crucifixion:

Now and then a slide moved on the door, and a flashlight stabbed into the cell to light up the figure of a man, hung by the wrists from a hook in the roof. The Knife had now been hung up

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<sup>126</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, *The Knife* (Jonathan Cape, 1930), p. 135.

<sup>127</sup> Johann A. Norstedt 'Peadar O'Donnell', in Denis Lane and Carol McCrory Lane (eds), *Modern Irish Literature* (Ungar, 1988), p. 488.

<sup>128</sup> Alexander González, *Peadar O'Donnell: A Reader's Guide* (Dufour Editions, 1997), p. 85.

<sup>129</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (U of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 164.

for hours, his toes just touching the ground, his weight swinging on his wrists. Consciousness hovered like sleep mocks an exhausted car driver, a thing of jerks and flashes.<sup>130</sup>

The novel further documents the brutality the soldiers, as they fire 'ballyhoo[s] of shots' at the prisoners and hose them down with water.<sup>131</sup> Yet O'Donnell is perhaps more concerned with outlining the daily acts of resistance of the prisoners as they operate their own command systems, attend 'engineering' classes on how to assemble bombs, dig tunnels and thwart efforts by the officers to count the prisoners. He also hints at his own fear, and even bitterness, at being sent back to Donegal under threat of execution. The two main fictional characters are sent back 'to our own county' and put in confinement awaiting court martial.<sup>132</sup> They must accept their slim chance of survival: 'it's just a question of squaring up the idea of being killed; we may as well get that straight, dodging it or hoping would only weaken us, and make the final difficult'.<sup>133</sup> The line between fact and fiction in the jail section is very thin and O'Donnell uses the novel to openly lash out at his civil war enemies. The Knife hopes to get 'one fist into the yellow blotched face of Glennon before I go'.<sup>134</sup> This is clearly a reference to Free State Divisional Adjutant Tom Glennon, who commanded the Finner Camp; O'Donnell claimed he was 'one of the few people on earth I heartily despised'.<sup>135</sup> The fictional character of Dan Sweeney, the Knife's antagonist, is also likely to be based on Joe Sweeney, who, like the fictional character, had been O'Donnell's commanding IRA officer during the war of independence, but subsequently took the Free State side.

Nevertheless, *The Knife* is motivated by a reconciliatory aim, if crudely rendered. Reflecting O'Donnell's genuine hope to rebuild the broken 'pattern of neighbourliness' after the civil war and advance a sense of socialist class solidarity, the novel emphasises how small Catholic landowners had more in common with their Protestant neighbours than the burgeoning middle-class supporters of the new Free State; the eponymous character of the novel is saved from a Free State firing squad by his neighbour, an Orangeman.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>130</sup> O'Donnell, *The Knife*, p. 220.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>135</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 132. See Kieran Glennon, *From Pogrom to Civil War: Tom Glennon and the Belfast IRA* (Mercier Press Ltd, 2013).

<sup>136</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, *There Will Be Another Day* (Dolemen Press, 1963), p. 24. Frank Gallagher's notes in his prison diary that O'Donnell felt that 'unity between Ulster Specials and [the] IRA on national freedom is not impossible'. Cited in Richard English, 'Green on red: two case studies in early twentieth century Irish republican thought', in D. George Boyce et al. (eds), *Political Thought in Ireland Since the Seventeenth Century* (Routledge, 2008), p. 180.

the depiction of prison scenes in *The Knife* and *The Gates Flew Open* took on political significance in the context of a mounting red scare. In October 1931, a number of socialist and republican organisations were banned and their members arrested. O'Donnell was essentially on the run when writing *The Gates Flew Open*, due to his role as founder of Saor Éire, an independent Marxist organisation which was also effectively the IRA's new political wing. His depiction of the prison chaplains' refusal to offer the sacraments to prisoners in both narratives was thus a direct affront to the Catholic Church, who denounced Saor Éire as 'frankly communist' and the IRA as 'sinful and irreligious'.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the publication of prison scenes was a challenge to the Cumann na nGaedheal government in the lead up to the 1932 election, in which Fianna Fáil successfully ran on a campaign to 'open the gaol gates' and release republican prisoners.<sup>138</sup>

O'Donnell includes a number of stark depictions of the prisoners' psychological plight. He admits there were times when 'life was full of an ultimate sense of tears and dark moods that seeped blood'.<sup>139</sup> After the executions of their comrades in December 1922, the prisoners become a 'wordless, soulless movement of lives suddenly empty'.<sup>140</sup> However, the most striking feature of the memoir is the use of comedy in the face of trauma. As Richard English observes, O'Donnell 'offered a version of civil war incarceration not entirely dissimilar to Wodehouse's version of British public school: japery, jollity, naive optimism, and boyish good humour pervading the wings, the sport, the educational classes'.<sup>141</sup> Even machine gun fire from the prisoner guards is met with 'with derisive cheers'.<sup>142</sup> Accounts of torture or impending death are often undercut by humorous anecdotes, such as when O'Donnell convinces the prison guards that he is suffering from diarrhoea and not, in fact, covered in soil from a tunnel-digging project. On another occasion, he manipulates his captors by convincing them that his spirit will haunt them if they have any hand in his execution. The employment of humour in the face of death is particularly apparent in the narrative treatment of the death of Peadar Breslin, who was shot in an attempted escape. News of Breslin's death is disrupted by the arrival of Andy Cooney wearing 'a pair of trousers that reached a little below his knees and were as tight-fitting as a stocking'.<sup>143</sup> O'Donnell later jocularly quips that the physical and psychological strain of the

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<sup>137</sup> Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell*, p. 68.

<sup>138</sup> Mary Rogan, *Prison Policy in Ireland: Politics, Penal-Welfarism and Political Imprisonment* (Taylor & Francis, 2011), p. 44.

<sup>139</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p 92.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid*, p. 86.

<sup>141</sup> Richard English, *Ernie O'Malley* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 25.

<sup>142</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 158.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid*, p. 67.

hunger strike was worth it for the post-hunger strike feast: 'You have missed one of life's great moments if you haven't tasted a brandy egg-flip after a forty one days' fast.'<sup>144</sup> This humour is not only an extension of the resistance of prisoners, it also might have offered a defence mechanism, or even a means of dissociation, in extreme situations. George A. Bonanno, who postulates that 'resilience in the face of loss or potential trauma is more common than is often believed', sees laughter as an adaptive response that can '[increase] the psychological distance from distress and [enhance] social relations'.<sup>145</sup>

O'Donnell's humour is often mobilised through the use of imaginative rhetorical strategies. In describing Dick Barrett's last moments before his execution, O'Donnell comically imagines that Barrett 'was to remember the cigarette famine when a twenty box of Players was put before him next morning'.<sup>146</sup> The use of inventive humour to supersede traumatic circumstances, yet maintain a level of resistance, is also apparent in O'Donnell's recruitment of animal imagery in both *The Knife* and *The Gates Flew Open*. The carnivalesque atmosphere is introduced as the newly-arrived prisoners are invited to 'get to know the other animals in the zoo'<sup>147</sup>. However, these images often prove unsettling, as Liam Mellows is described as 'kittenish' and O'Donnell 'shuffled through the cell in an aimless wander like a sick dog'.<sup>148</sup> This ambivalence regarding the human/animal divide follows well established tropes to illustrate the total degradation of the imprisoned individual, but these uneasy figurations also destabilise what is discursively understood as real and point to what Jacques Derrida refers to as the 'possibility of fiction' that haunts 'so-called truthful, responsible, serious, real testimony'.<sup>149</sup>

While O'Donnell's narrative certainly owes much to a long legacy of prison writing, his memoir is also replete with intertextual references which not only highlight the narrative's metafictionality, but also position the suffering of Irish republicans alongside the traumas endured in conflict worldwide. During imprisonment, O'Donnell refers to the eclectic array of books both he and the other prisoners read, including texts by Shakespeare, Thomas à Kempis,

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<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>145</sup> George A. Bonanno, 'Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?', *American Psychologist* 59, no. 1 (2004), pp 20–28; D. Keltner and G. A. Bonanno, 'A Study of Laughter and Dissociation: Distinct Correlates of Laughter and Smiling during Bereavement', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73, no. 4 (October 1997), p. 687.

<sup>146</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 81.

<sup>147</sup> O'Donnell, *The Knife*, p. 222.

<sup>148</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 29, p. 11.

<sup>149</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony* (with Maurice Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*), trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 28.

Robinson Crusoe, Victor Hugo, P. G. Wodehouse and Rabindranath Tagore. In particular, he draws on a number of international, anti-imperial narratives. In recounting the executions of his four colleagues, O'Donnell recalls how McKelvey was deeply impressed by the 'ghastly' execution scene of a revolutionary in Italy in Ethel Voynich's novel *The Gadfly* (1897). The execution turned into a butchery as each member of the firing squad aimed aside, hoping not to fire the death-shot.<sup>150</sup> McKelvey's own execution is rendered through the prism of this literary scene, as O'Donnell imagines that McKelvey 'had time to remember the Gadfly' before the nine shots sounded. O'Donnell further draws attention to his memoir's self-reflexivity through his allusions to two anti-war narratives which emerged in the post-war period: the autobiographical play *Journey's End* (1928) by R. C. Sherriff, based on the experience of a British army infantry in 1918, and the German semi-autobiographical war novel *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* [The Case of Sergeant Grischa] (1927) which dramatically recounts the execution of a Russian escapee from a German prison camp. These accounts were published *after* O'Donnell's imprisonment; they thus very clearly highlight that personal memory is always inflected by literary and cultural engagement and the extent to which both history and fiction are subject to constant mediation and remediation.<sup>151</sup> On this account, O'Donnell's memoir performs a 'multidirectional' model of memory, as conceived of by Rothberg, which perceives memory as subject to 'ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private'.<sup>152</sup> O'Donnell's coupling of the suffering of republican prisoners with that of other oppressed groups – including soldiers in the British and Russian armies – not only reflects O'Donnell's international socialist agenda, it also speaks to Kalí Tal's identification of the need among those who have experienced trauma to identify with a wider community of 'survivors', to contextualise their suffering, and 'to connect it across history to other atrocities, committed at other times'.<sup>153</sup>

Testimonies are founded upon a dialogic relationship and are produced when the testifier feels part of a community that will readily act as 'co-witnesses' and verify his/her account.<sup>154</sup> This dialogue with a public audience is particularly apparent in O'Donnell's civil war testimonies which were explicitly addressed to a strong, affirming, republican readership. *The Knife* was written 'For the IRA, of the IRA',<sup>155</sup> while the first edition of *The Gates Flew*

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<sup>150</sup> E. L. (Ethel Lillian) Voynich, *The Gadfly* (Henry Holt and Co., 1897).

<sup>151</sup> See Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Walter de Gruyter, 2009).

<sup>152</sup> Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, p. 2.

<sup>153</sup> Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 74.

<sup>154</sup> Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 124.

<sup>155</sup> *An Phoblacht*, 22 November and 6 December 1930; Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell*, p. 56.

*Open* included the dedication, 'To the Unbreakables; the men and women who milled the Stampede of 1922'.<sup>156</sup> The allegiance to this 'unbreakable' audience is apparent in O'Donnell's depiction of the civil war as a conflict that was still being waged, summed up in his claim that '[t]his was not the end of a book, this defeat, but the end of a chapter'.<sup>157</sup> This 'cyclical-linear' frame of commemoration in nationalist republican memory built on 'a recurring pattern of struggle and defeat' is arguably at odds with narrative closure.<sup>158</sup> Although LaCapra acknowledges that 'founding trauma' templates can allow an oppressed group 'to reclaim a history and to transform it into a more or less enabling basis of life in the present', he also argues that such sacralising myths may undermine the need to come to terms with the past.<sup>159</sup> In particular, individuals 'may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it [...] One's bond with the dead, especially with dead intimates, may invest trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound'.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, this idea of a 'fidelity to trauma' may explain the paradoxically vocal reticence of many civil war veterans whose silence often served as a rhetorical device to draw attention to the 'unspeakable' event.

*The Gates Flew Open* ends on a victorious note when O'Donnell escapes from the Curragh. He dramatically recounts how the searchlights went dim and he was directed out of the camp by the light of the North Star as the prison gates mysteriously 'flew open' before him. This escape is rendered in supernatural terms; a friend was 'sure it was Saint Columcille, the stout Tirconaillian, who opened the gate and Saint Brigid herself who put out the light'.<sup>161</sup> However, this romantic narrative closure is at odds with O'Donnell's comrades' accounts. In fact, a number of his co-prisoners later admitted that they were 'very sore' that O'Donnell had escaped in place of Jack Keogh, who they planned to break out to evade court-martial.<sup>162</sup> Keogh was later considered to have become 'insane' 'as result of ill-treatment'<sup>163</sup>; indeed, a number

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<sup>156</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 5. This dedication is omitted in later editions.

<sup>157</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 86.

<sup>158</sup> Beiner, 'Between Trauma and Triumphalism', p. 375.

<sup>159</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 57.

<sup>160</sup> LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 22.

<sup>161</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 239.

<sup>162</sup> O'Donnell notes that he escaped 'wearing Dr Comer's brown boots'. Dr Comer insisted that he had ordered the boots from Arnott's specifically for Jack Comer. See 'Jack Comer [Interview]' in Cormac O'Malley and Cormac Ó Comhraí (eds), *The Men Will Talk to Me: Galway Interviews* by Ernie O'Malley (Mercier Press, 2013).

<sup>163</sup> Seamus MacCosgair, 'Private Notice Question. – Case Of A Prisoner In Maryborough Jail', *Dáil Éireann*, 22 Apr 1926, Vol. 15 No. 3.

of prisoners suffered from what was referred to at the time as 'barbed-wire-disease'.<sup>164</sup> This point of contention further highlights the 'vulnerabilities' in *all* revolutionary narratives and underscores the fiction inherent in autobiography. It also complicates the idea of solidarity between prisoners, let alone among a wider 'unbreakable' republican community. The imaginative re-writing of the escape points to the individualism of survivor instinct, and also suggests that the heroic escape narrative clouded actualities of fear, discordance and even mental illness that did not find space in O'Donnell's redemptive trauma testimony.

### The Psychological Devastation of War in O'Donnell's Rural Novels

The hope in a redemptive narrative of traumatic defeat is less apparent in O'Donnell's earlier novels, a number of which were developed and written during his internment. *Storm* was written *in extremis* and smuggled out by a friendly prison guard, while the idea for O'Donnell's second novel *Islanders* came to him as '[j]ail life reminded me vividly of the few years I had spent on small islands'.<sup>165</sup> This analogy between prison and island life was perhaps motivated by rumours that the government intended to transport prisoners to some island, to which O'Donnell's co-prisoner Liam Mellow's responded with a satirical short story entitled 'Islanditis' published in the prisoner journal, *The Book of Cells*. The prisoners' daily monotony, cut off from communication and sight, is not far from the everyday struggles of O'Donnell's islanders.

While the revolution has no more than a tangential effect on the rural communities in *Islanders* who face more desperate economic struggles, O'Donnell confronts the personal and psychological devastation of the civil war more directly in his third novel *Adriagoole* (1929). The novel was inspired by the reporting of the death by starvation of a family in Castletownbere, Co. Cork, in 1927 due to lack of economic opportunities after the evacuation of the British fleet. Transposing the situation to his native Donegal, O'Donnell documents the economic impact of the revolution on Brigid and Hughie Ó Dálaigh. They harbour 'tired republican soldiers' during the struggle for independence, despite their silent worries that 'their

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<sup>164</sup> See Úna Kavanagh, 'How anti-treaty internees represent themselves in an autograph book from the Curragh Tintown Camp 1923' (Unpublished MA thesis, NUI Galway, 2018). According to a pamphlet issued by the Political Prisoners' Committee, Jack Keogh was 'the sixth prisoner driven mad in Maryboro' (no date; possibly 1926). University of Kansas, Spencer Research Library, 'Collection of Irish broadsides, pamphlets, clippings, etc.' Available at: <https://ksrldf.ku.edu/ksrl.sc.ohegartyQ42.pdf> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>165</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p. 28.

supply of potatoes would be used up with all the traffic'.<sup>166</sup> These difficulties are augmented with the slide to civil war: the republicans still arrive at the doorstep, but now the Ó Dálaigh's are met with suspicion from their neighbours; the children are even tricked by the local schoolteacher into divulging the presence of the men on the run.<sup>167</sup> Neddie Brian and Hughie Dálach are mistaken for republicans and are accidentally shot by Free State soldiers when rounding up lambs in the fields. The bonds of the community are further shaken when young Grania dies from a fever and the locals keep their distance. Hughie is arrested for poteen distilling, sentenced to twelve months in prison and discovers on release that Brigid and the children have starved to death in his absence. In the concluding lines of the novel, Hughie is goaded into a motor-car 'that would take him to the asylum'.<sup>168</sup> Unlike *The Gates Flew Open*, the novel confronts the interface between war and mental illness and complicates the more hopeful narrative of redemptive republican trauma. Yet even O'Donnell was uneasy with this allusion to mental illness: he later expressed regret about Hughie's tragic demise and remarked that he wished he had Hughie emigrate instead of being institutionalised.<sup>169</sup>

While O'Donnell once quipped that *The Gates Flew Open* was a 'potboiler' written because 'I couldn't think of anything else to write about', his retellings of the civil war point to his urge to tell, but also a reluctant to stray too far from his hopeful, future-focused republican-socialist agenda. Testifying to the civil war was also a risky venture.<sup>170</sup> Not long after its publication, O'Donnell was made to account publicly for the anti-clerical comments in *The Gates Flew Open*. This occurred during a libel case O'Donnell brought against the Dominican magazine, *The Irish Rosary*, for the false allegation that he planned to establish an 'anti-God state' and that he had travelled to Moscow in 1929 to study the techniques of revolution. O'Donnell was no doubt accustomed to such slander, given criticism that no 'Irish Catholic' could read *The Knife* 'without a blush of shame'.<sup>171</sup> However, the case was a financial disaster for O'Donnell. Judge Hanna ruled that an allegation of 'Sovietism' was not defamatory given the anti-clericalism of O'Donnell's writings.

Nicholas Allen proposes that the litigation case taken against O'Donnell, as well as those taken against IRA memoirists Dan Breen and Ernie O'Malley, illustrated 'the difficulty of

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<sup>166</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, *Adriagoole* (J. Cape, 1929), pp 235–236.

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>169</sup> Grattan Freyer, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Bucknell University Press, 1973), p. 46

<sup>170</sup> Peter Hegarty, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Mercier Press, 1999), p. 199.

<sup>171</sup> [T. O'H] Terence O'Hanlon 'Recent Fiction: Irish Author's Story', *Irish Independent*, 8 December 1930, p. 4.

looking to literature for any confirmation of a cherished past'.<sup>172</sup> The cross-examination in court nevertheless illustrated how O'Donnell's use of third person narrative for the author-character was not only a personal distancing device, but a protective shield:

Mr Fitzgerald: Who is 'The Knife'? Is he a real character?

[O'Donnell]: The Knife is not a real character.

[Mr Fitzgerald]: He is speaking your own thoughts?

[O'Donnell]: He is created in order to interpret a very difficult phase in Irish history.<sup>173</sup>

Despite writing two testimonial accounts of the civil war, it was indeed a 'very difficult phase' for O'Donnell. Like many other IRA leaders, he destroyed his military papers for fear they could start 'the Civil War all over again'.<sup>174</sup> Yet ironically, he also created his own written archive of *his* civil war by tapping into the republican model of trauma testimony available to him which had an established 'confirming' audience. His intertextual narratives hint at the difficulties of categorising his experience and at the ethical complexities of telling, especially when endeavouring to speak on behalf of others who may or may not appreciate such an effort. Like Ryan, O'Donnell practised writing about his civil war experience in fiction first, before publishing his first-person jail memoir. Nevertheless, it is often in his fiction, freer from the pressures of first-person narration, that his strongest political and emotional concerns are addressed.

The litigation cases against O'Donnell did not mark the end of testimonial accounts of the civil war. They may in fact have further pushed authors to explore alternative narrative forms – as in Carty's and Mulloy's works, which grapple more directly with the psychological legacies of war.

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<sup>172</sup> Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War*, p. 200.

<sup>173</sup> 'Priest-Editor Tells of Receipt of Manuscript; Mr. O'Donnell Questioned as to His Continental Visits; Closing Stages of Libel Action', *Irish Press*, 15 June 1932, p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> Tom Boylan, 'Peadar O'Donnell: a rebellious relative', in Ciara Boylan, Sarah-Anne Buckley, and Pat Dolan (eds), *Family Histories of the Irish Revolution* (Four Courts Press, 2018), p. 188.

## Frank Carty's *The Legion Of The Rearguard*: Between Battles and Cups Of Tea

While O'Donnell's *The Gates Flew Open* was decried for its rancour, Francis Carty's novel *Legion of the Rearguard* was praised for being 'devoid of bitter partisanship'.<sup>175</sup> Published in 1934, the novel followed Carty's Tailteann prize-winning novel *The Irish Volunteer* (1932) published by Dent Press, London, to considerable success. Although novels are not strictly sequential – Art Russell inhabits *The Irish Volunteer*, while Paul Davin is the leading character of *Legion of the Rearguard* – both protagonists are clearly author surrogates and share Carty's upbringing in a petty bourgeois Wexford family with strong ties to the Home Rule Party. An 'improbable revolutionary'<sup>176</sup>, Carty joined the publicity committee of Sinn Féin after the Rising, served as registrar of the republican arbitration court and subsequently joined the Volunteers. Taking the anti-treaty side, he was arrested in a skirmish in July 1922 just weeks after the outbreak of the civil war. He spent the next year and ten months in Maryboro prison, and later in Tintown. Being on the republican side negatively affected Carty. The entire family moved to Dublin, where their new home in Rathmines became something of an IRA headquarters. Carty perceived himself as an 'exile from the old county'.<sup>177</sup> While employment options were initially limited for released republican prisoners, he went on to enjoy a long career in journalism and editing. After working as a manager for The Parkside Press and C. J. Fallon publishers, he was appointed editor in 1957 of Éamon de Valera's *The Irish Press*, became editor of *The Sunday Press* in 1962 and was also the editorial director of *The Irish Digest* and *The English Digest*.<sup>178</sup>

Advertised as 'the work of an eye-witness',<sup>179</sup> reviewers commented on the journalistic eye for detail in *The Legion of the Rearguard*. One reviewer contended, '[it] is not a novel in a sense, but rather a history of this internecine quarrel between the two Irish factions'<sup>180</sup>, while another considered it 'rather the work of a reporter than of a novelist'.<sup>181</sup> In that sense, Carty's novels are best classified as 'autofictions', defined by Serge Doubrovsky as 'fiction,

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<sup>175</sup> Desmond Clarke and Stephen J. Brown (eds), *Ireland in Fiction: V. 2: A Guide to Irish Novels, Tales, Romances and Folklore* (Cork: Royal Carbery Books, 1985), p. 42.

<sup>176</sup> Ciaran Carty, *Intimacy with Strangers: A Life of Brief Encounters* (Lilliput Press, 2013), p. 11.

<sup>177</sup> Carty, *Bruises, Baws and Bastards*, p. 158; 'Margaret Carty' [obituary], *Irish Press*, 12 June 1946, p. 9; 'Selskar' [Francis Carty], 'A Fianna Fáil View', *The Echo*, 7 February 1931.

<sup>178</sup> 'Editor Retires', *Irish Press*, 30 July 1968.

<sup>179</sup> Francis Carty, *Legion of the Rearguard* (Dent, 1934).

<sup>180</sup> 'Ireland's Fight: Legion of the Rearguard', *Natal Mercury* [Durban, South Africa], 14 December 1934.

<sup>181</sup> 'Two Rising Catholic Novelists', *Universe*, 7 September, 1934.

d'événements et de faits strictement réels'.<sup>182</sup> Carty's detailed 35-page witness statement to the Bureau of Military History in 1954 parallels the novels in terms of narrative sequence, factual descriptions and even use of vocabulary. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that his fictional writings of the early thirties did not somewhat crystallise his later recollections.<sup>183</sup> Nevertheless, Carty exploits the imaginative possibilities of fiction and the freedom offered by third-person narration to offer an alternative view of the civil conflict which searches for closure in an attempt to foster mutual understandings between the two sides and highlight the unromantic underbelly of war and its traumatic impact on communal and family life. In addition to promoting collective healing through the plot, the restorative nature of language is also incorporated into the fiction; the protagonist, Art, takes up his pen at night, as his 'urge for mental activity found an outlet in writing'.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, the genre of the novel, often associated with the project of nation-building, is uniquely capable of tackling Ryan's concept of 'ridding' *ourselves* of the past rather than 'brooding' over it. As Leonard V. Smith argues in his study of French soldiers' testimonies, the novel 'is a genre that testifies to a search for closure', offering an alternative to the 'open-ended temporality' of nonfiction testimony.<sup>185</sup>

The majority of first-person accounts of IRA activity – such as those of Dan Breen (1924), Ernie O'Malley (1936) and Tom Barry (1956) – were from the pens of leading figures who had significant insights into the political wing of the organisation at a national level. Carty's activities, by contrast, were restricted and highly localised to the extent that he was disparagingly referred to as 'head bottler washer' when reading on behalf of the South Wexford Deputation before a Military Pension advisory committee.<sup>186</sup> Given that he was arguably not considered 'qualified' to provide a straight-up autobiographical account of his experience, the hybrid genre of autofiction enabled Carty to tell his story while also providing an insight into the experience of ordinary citizens and combatants that is sensitive to class and social questions. His realistic style is indebted to the European canon of postwar literature, but the

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<sup>182</sup> 'fiction, of strictly real events and facts'. Cited in Patrick Saveau, 'L'autofiction à la Doubrovsky: mise au point', in Claude Burgelin, Isabelle Grell, and Roger-Yves Roche (eds), *Autofiction(s)* (Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2010), p. 307.

<sup>183</sup> Carty was also interviewed for Calton Younger's 1968 study, *Ireland's Civil War*. Furthermore, Carty's sons – Ciaran Carty and Francis Xavier Carty – have produced memoirs which detail their father's experiences. See Ciaran Carty, *Confessions of a Sewer Rat: A Personal History of Censorship & the Irish Cinema* (New Island Books, 1995); Ciaran Carty, *Intimacy with Strangers: A Life of Brief Encounters* (Lilliput Press, 2013); Francis Xavier Carty, *Bruises, Baws and Bastards: Glimpses into a Long Life Passing* (Able Press 2017).

<sup>184</sup> Carty, *The Irish Volunteer*, p. 56.

<sup>185</sup> Leonard V. Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 150.

<sup>186</sup> Carty read on behalf of the South Wexford Deputation before advisory committee on 3rd February 1936. Military Archive, IRA Nominal Rolls, RO/546.

affirmative character of his realism was also accredited to the influence of Daniel Corkery. Carty concurred that Irish writers should be motivated by Corkery's critical triumvirate of Irish life, namely, the religious consciousness of the people, Irish nationalism and the land. Yet while Corkery's collection of revolutionary stories, *The Hounds of Banba* (1920), appeared in the midst of the war of independence and embraced 'bald expressions of revolutionary exaltation'<sup>187</sup>, Carty's revolution is characterised by, in his own words, 'anti-climax'.<sup>188</sup> His volunteers, though earnest, lack sufficient military training, are impoverished to the extent they feel 'the stones through the soles of their boots' and find that more often than not their operations are thwarted by inexperience, poor planning or self-doubt.<sup>189</sup>

Carty's experience in the civil war were perhaps not untypical among anti-treatyites. As officer commanding of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, South Wexford Brigade, he initially followed the orders of the General Head Quarters of the new Free State army and was even fitted with an army uniform. However, as the anti-treaty forces under Rory O'Connor occupied the Four Courts, the brigade transferred allegiance to the Four Courts. Carty, though uncertain, followed suit. He was subsequently appointed Divisional Training Officer and ran a training camp outside New Ross. After hostilities erupted in June 1922, his military engagements were few. He was active in the takeover of Enniscorthy castle by siege on 7 July 1922, which, though a success for the republicans, was accompanied by heavy loss of life.<sup>190</sup> The republican forces, however, lacked the manpower to maintain these positions in face of the numerically superior and better-equipped Free State army. No less than a week later, Carty and his men were rounded up after they were suddenly attacked by Free State soldiers while casually resting on a footpath outside the post office in Ferns.

All of these experiences, from the treaty debates, Volunteer training, arrest and imprisonment, are chronicled through the fictional character of Paul Davin in *Legion of the Rearguard*. Given the brevity of his actual experience, the novel enabled Carty to imaginatively tease out this difficult period by elongating the narrative and delaying the arrest of Paul until later in the civil war. *Legion of the Rearguard* is characterised by a strong romance plot absent from the first novel. It also diverts more from Carty's factual accounts than *The Irish Volunteer*, suggesting, therefore, that the imaginative was more necessary when addressing the civil war.

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<sup>187</sup> Storey, *Representing the Troubles in Irish Short Fiction*, p. 27.

<sup>188</sup> Francis Carty, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 1040, 20 November 1954, p. 6.

<sup>189</sup> Carty, *The Irish Volunteer*, p. 105.

<sup>190</sup> Aaron Ó Maonaigh, 'The Killurin Ambush and the Outbreak of Civil War in County Wexford', *The Past: The Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society*, no. 33 (2019), pp 52–67.

The first section of *Legion of the Rearguard* offers prolonged faux-journalistic descriptions of the treaty debates. In this, Carty provides pen portraits of many of the leading politicians of the period, including Arthur Griffith, Éamon de Valera, Michael Collins and Cathal Brugha, and aims to present an unbiased account of the rationale behind their stances on the treaty.<sup>191</sup> While reviewers commented on Carty's 'earnest desire to deal fairly with both sides'<sup>192</sup> and suggested that the narrative was 'entirely free from bitterness',<sup>193</sup> Carty was a strong supporter of Fianna Fáil and opposed Cumann na nGaedheal's economic policy, arguing that the payment of land annuities to the British government was a betrayal of the principles of the deceased pro-treaty leader Arthur Griffith. His supposedly nonpartisan approach is undermined by the fact that the book's cover is a portrait of Fianna Fáil party leader Éamon de Valera, while the title clearly echoes de Valera's famous call on the 'soldiers of the Republic, Legion of the Rearguard' on 24 May 1923 to give up 'military victory'. Fianna Fáil had recently entered government in coalition with the Labour Party in February 1932. Carty's hopes for reconciliation in his 1934 novel were thus coming from a position of newly-acquired political authority and his hopes that this new government could offer a clean slate to both republicans and 'republican' treaty supporters, following the lineage of Arthur Griffith.

The strength of the novel lies in the detailed, even photographic, depictions of family and communal life in the context of the war, as '[b]attles alternate [...] with cups of tea'.<sup>194</sup> For Paul, the 'continuous agony of mind which had afflicted his parents' was 'more intense than physical trouble' endured by active combatants.<sup>195</sup> Throughout the novel, war invades domestic spaces: in the opening pages, Sarah Davin contemplates taking out the carpets and linoleum again. Due to raids by the Black and Tans, the floors of the whole house were bare; 'your feet made a hollow sound, as if there was nobody living in the place'.<sup>196</sup> Nonetheless, the characters continue in their daily social routines; Rosaleen's mother is more concerned about whether her haircut is too short than with the war or her mounting debt, while Bridget makes the most of the family rosary to simultaneously pray and dry her hair.<sup>197</sup> Carty also gives insights into the intimate relations of men on the run absent from many straight historical accounts: volunteers 'slept together on a mattress at one end of the little room', are secretly

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<sup>191</sup> Carty's contentious account of the circumstances of Michael Collins' death at Béal na mBláth, purportedly based on an account he heard when in prison, has garnered some historical attention.

<sup>192</sup> Owen Regan, 'Looking at Ireland', *Sunday Dispatch* [Irish Edition], 22 July 1934.

<sup>193</sup> *Irish Press*, 17 July 1934, p. 2.

<sup>194</sup> *The Observer*, 12 August 1934.

<sup>195</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 271.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid.*, p. 180, p. 192.

consoled by the 'Sacred Heart badges' (or wind-up badges) made for them by the nuns, and sheepishly rub sulphur ointment into each other's backs to reduce scabies.<sup>198</sup> Nevertheless, the anxiety of the characters shines through: Paul's father, Jamesy, has no appetite and surreptitiously feeds his meals to the dog; Ned Coyne can no longer maintain the sobriety required among the Volunteers due to his 'strained nerves', while Dempsey finds himself overcome by hunger and sleeplessness, and dreads that the 'first rifle-crack might [...] send him cowering for cover'.<sup>199</sup> English novelist Graham Greene (1904–1991), who reported from Dublin in the direct aftermath of the civil war,<sup>200</sup> recognised the insights that Carty's account offered; 'this novel written by an eye-witness of the civil war [...] presents what history cannot do, the curious mental contrasts of a local, a provincial war, the shy romantic prudish affections of gunmen on the run.'<sup>201</sup>

The strongest example of Carty's efforts to illustrate the war's invasion of the domestic is his decision to creatively locate a devastating attack, that is highly redolent of Carty's actual surrender at Fern's post office, into the Davin family home. In Carty's witness statement, he documents how he and his men were forced to retreat to Ferns post office due to mechanical issues with one of their lorries after having blown up a bridge one mile north of the village. As they rest on the footpath outside the post office, they are surprised by a Free State army ambush. In the novel, the men are similarly forced to retreat due to engine failure after a similar operation to halt Free State army advances – although they put down road blocks rather than blow up bridges. They are sitting on the footpath with their backs to the Davin family home – instead of the post office – when the 'dark turreted armoured car dashed up into sight':

The armoured car came level with the yard gate. Bullets crashed through the stable door in front of him. He flung himself sideways through the kitchen door, which was on his left, and before he could pull up, was sprawling across the table, scattering cups and saucers about the floor. His mother stood stiff with terror between the table and the fire-place. She held a big teapot in her hand. With a sudden cry she dropped the teapot, which smashed on the tiles, filling the kitchen with steam.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Carty, *The Irish Volunteer*, p. 158, Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 135, p. 201.

<sup>199</sup> Carty, *The Irish Volunteer*, p. 14, p. 126.

<sup>200</sup> See Graham Greene 'Impressions of Dublin', *Reflections* (Reinhardt Books, 1990), pp 1–3.

<sup>201</sup> Graham Green, 'Fiction', *The Spectator*, Volume 153, Issues 5532–5544, 13 July 1934.

<sup>202</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 133.

The sound of a crashing teapot becomes integrated into the soundscape of war and thus reflects the perceived intimate, or even unnatural, dimension of civil conflict. Indeed, the raiding party, although mostly made up of Dublin Guards, also included Milo Burke and Ned Coyne who were often harboured in the Davin home. Far from presenting a simplified victim-perpetrator binary, the fictional narrator highlights the impact of carrying out this attack on the Free State army soldiers: 'It was a dirty job having to turn a machine-gun on the house which had so often opened its doors to them [...] they had only done their duty as soldiers. They felt ashamed, all the same, and were reluctant to show themselves.'<sup>203</sup>

This attack on the Davin home results in the deaths of two of Paul's comrades. This resonates with Carty's direct testimony of the two deaths he witnessed during the siege of Enniscorthy. The ethical complexities of bearing witness to death are arguably teased out further in the fictional account, as the narrator reflects on how this experience evoked various reactions among the characters, offering a polyvocal response to the trauma of witnessing death. On the other hand, Carty is matter-of-fact in his witness statement. He recounts that '[a]s we reached the corner of the lane they opened fire on us. Volunteer Maurice Spillane was killed outright and Paddy O'Brien was wounded. [...] Paddy Fleming, O'Sullivan and myself carried Paddy O'Brien along the lane and he was removed to the hospital where I visited him the next day and found him dying'.<sup>204</sup> Ernie O'Malley, who was also present at the siege of Enniscorthy, documents the same incident in the posthumous *The Singing Flame* (written in the early 1930s, but not published until 1978).<sup>205</sup> Rather than rely on unembellished, clinical description as Carty does, O'Malley evokes what Tom Walker refers to as the 'unsettling combination of the terrible with the comic'.<sup>206</sup> O'Malley's description of the death Maurice Spillane and shooting of Paddy O'Brien is deflected by a Rabelaisian image of a stout, overweight, unsoldierly soldier:

The noise of bursting cases, then silence. *A sudden rifle crack and a boy beside me fell.* A few more sharp cracks from some distance, then Paddy O'Brien in front staggered, sprawled forward. His collar and neck were stained with quickly flowing blood. I banged slowly with my revolver in the direction of rifle fire; I reloaded and emptied again. When I looked behind me I saw the men carrying Paddy disappear round the end of the lane. The other man lay flat

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<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>204</sup> Carty, 'Witness Statement', p. 32.

<sup>205</sup> Cormac K. H. O'Malley, 'The Publication History of On Another Man's Wound', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 7, no. 3 (2003), p. 136.

<sup>206</sup> Tom Walker, 'A true story: The third policeman and the writing of terror', in Paul Fagan and Ruben Borg (eds), *Flann O'Brien: Contesting Legacies* (Cork University Press, 2014), p. 133.

on his back. He moaned; his face was a whitish grey. His eyes were staring. I pulled him in close to the wall. I took cover beside him against a shallow gate entrance and heard him begin an Act of Contrition, say 'O my God... my God I am heartily sorry...' slowly, haltingly, seemingly unconscious. It must have been a habit with him to be able to say it just now when he was dying. He struggled to the last words. There was a little shuddering gurgle and he was dead. At the gate above me was a Wexford officer. He was pressed against the gate but he was too fat to be under cover; his posterior protruded and shook with nervousness. *I laughed. He turned his head in surprise. Then when I had pointed out the cause of my mirth, he laughed too* (my emphasis).<sup>207</sup>

In *Legion of the Rearguard*, Carty also resorts to a sort of ironic humour to reflect on the senselessness of the deaths. Like Maurice Spillane, the boy in O'Malley's account, Pax Murphy's death is immediate: 'Though there was no sign of any wound, a bullet had entered his heart. He looked as if he were still sleeping; it was hard to believe he was dead.'<sup>208</sup> Neale Rowan's pain is more visible, however, as he wriggles in a pool of dark blood, muttering between his teeth, 'I'm not going to die'.<sup>209</sup> The seriousness of his condition evades the parish priest, Father Meyler, who mistakes Rowan's delirious singing for celebration. He scowls at Rowan, asking 'What about the poor people all over the country, robbed and oppressed by you and the likes of you?'<sup>210</sup> Only on realising he is in the presence of death does the priest administer the last rites. This ironic representation of death was a feature of postwar literature, as the former tropes of tragic heroic death were replaced by ironic descriptions of disillusion, filtered through what Paul Fussell refers to as the 'dynamics of hope abridged'.<sup>211</sup>

The narrator's gaze also repeatedly draws attention to women's responses to the death that surrounds them. Paul's mother, Sarah, helplessly cradles Pax Murphy, watching as the 'poor boy's life was ebbing away before her eyes'.<sup>212</sup> Bridget is so shocked that 'her frail body shook so violently with sobbing that she spilt most of the water [...] She looked up doubtfully at Paul, her eyes red and swollen, big tears dropping down her cheeks [...]'.<sup>213</sup> Paul is particularly affected by the corporeal manifestations of Bridget's pain and her 'pathetic expression *almost* made him cry' (my emphasis).<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Ernie O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Anvil Books, 1978), p. 135.

<sup>208</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 136.

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>211</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 35.

<sup>212</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 138.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.*, p. 138.

In this sense, the women's responses, more so than the actual scenes of violence, are presented as emotional triggers. That the women's distress is more viscerally described is indicative of how trauma, through the language of 'nerve troubles' or 'hysteria', was considered a natural response for women within the social and cultural conventions of the time. The female body often constitutes an analogy for men's (repressed) suffering and becomes a site onto which the collective trauma of war is projected. This too emerges in first-person testimonies. A prime example is Mossie Hartnett's posthumous memoir *Victory and Woe* in which Hartnett's aunt's emotional breakdowns are referenced throughout and can be read as a vehicle through which Hartnett draws attention to the psychological impact of the conflict more generally. Autobiography scholar Mary Mason highlights this 'grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other' as an enabling narrative strategy to facilitate self-expression.<sup>215</sup> In one extract in *Victory and Woe*, Hartnett describes the fright his aunt received when an IRA man in the house accidentally pulled the trigger of his gun. Yet he clearly draws a contrast between his aunt's embodiment of trauma and his own 'suffering in silence' according to the values of masculine stoicism:

'[W]e rushed into the kitchen to see my aunt in a state of collapse [...] It was a truly frightening experience for anyone to undergo, much less a woman. We hadn't even a drop of spirits in the house to restore her shattered nerves. I usually had to suffer in silence the recriminations that came my way as a result of this and other episodes at that time'.<sup>216</sup>

Carty's active civil war experience ended with his arrest at the post office at Ferns. Yet in the novel, he imaginatively explores how the civil war would have continued had he escaped from prison. Carty had indeed attempted to escape transportation from the Ferns schoolhouse by crawling under a school bench. However, his escape was thwarted by Free State commanding officer, Seán Gallagher, who recognised Carty from the siege of Enniscorthy. Carty often recounted how Gallagher went to kick him and how he 'felt like a schoolboy caught in some misdemeanour by a senior boy'.<sup>217</sup>

In contrast, Paul successfully escapes from the garrison by posing as a 'transport man' and jumping down a fourteen foot wall to safety. Escape, the novel suggests, would have only

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<sup>215</sup> Mary Mason, 'The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers', in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (eds), *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p. 321.

<sup>216</sup> Mossie Hartnett, *Victory and Woe: A Classics of Irish History* (University College Dublin Press, 2002), p. 321.

<sup>217</sup> Xavier Carty, *Bruises, Baws and Bastards*.

prolonged the despair, as Paul begins 'to doubt the wisdom of pushing principles to their logical conclusion'.<sup>218</sup> Although Paul successfully occupies a post in Drumsonnis after breaking free, the republicans ultimately stand little chance against the strength of their opponents. As O/C, Paul is forced to give the rather inglorious orders to disband, determined to prevent further bloodshed. Shortly afterwards, he is shot down as he attempts to escape across the fields from his parents' home. When interned locally, Paul escapes court-martial due to his injuries, but his comrade, Dempsey, is executed for being captured wearing a Free State army uniform when aiding de Valera's passage through Wexford. Fiction thus enables Carty to draw attention to the contentious state-sanctioned executions of republican prisoners.<sup>219</sup> He also works in a subtle critique of the yet-to-be-studied class-motivated selection of men for execution: 'Why the staters, as a rule, shot members of the rank and file rather than influential officers, was not clear; they may have hoped thus to create a more salutary and demoralising effect.'<sup>220</sup>

Carty's description of jail life, like those of O'Donnell, perpetuate the performance of resistance typical of republican prison narratives. Paul is 'neither unhappy nor uncomfortable' in the camp. Prison life is initially presented through an optimistic lens: food is 'good and plentiful', the prisoners enjoy hot baths, benefit from their 'rest cure' from the strain of guerrilla warfare, attend classes, and play Gaelic football. Moreover, Carty indicates that Paul learnt 'a lesson in charity, for he discovered the core of decency in the heart of even the most obnoxious person into whose company he was forced'.<sup>221</sup> However, disillusion grows with the defeat of Sinn Féin in the 1923 August general election. For Carty, the hunger strikes further splinter the spirit of Tintown, as those who came off the strike were pitted against those who continued. Although he took part in a 23-day strike and was among the last to remain on strike – alongside O'Donnell – the fictional protagonist is more vocal in expressing his doubts about the purpose of the strike and dreads that 'hunger-striking would permanently injure his brain'.<sup>222</sup> In a clear reference to O'Donnell's earlier published testimony, the end of the strike is heralded by the 'arrival of the egg-flip'. In the novel, however, this note of victory is quickly replaced by a 'consciousness of defeat', the 'full realization of their mistake' and, in particular, an understanding of 'the cruel mockery it was to make one's parents the victims of propaganda'.<sup>223</sup> On his release, Paul's parents embody the trauma of the war: Jamesy's hair had gone white,

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<sup>218</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 185.

<sup>219</sup> See Enright, *The Irish Civil War*.

<sup>220</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 247.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid*, p. 253.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid*, p. 262.

<sup>223</sup> *ibid*, p. 269.

while Sarah's dazingly white apron, 'was no longer a symbol of her bustling vitality, but seemed merely to emphasize the defeat of the spirit whose body it shielded'.<sup>224</sup>

### The Civil War Love Triangle

The strong romance plot that Carty weaves through the novel counterbalances and muffles such utterances of dismay and carries the narrative towards a sense of closure. Evelyn Cobley contends that for readers of First World War documentary novels, the 'verisimilitude of fictional elements' did not undermine their perceived 'accurate reproduction of factual knowledge'.<sup>225</sup> This is clear from M. J. MacManus' belief that the 'slight thread of fiction' upon which Carty's narrative was hung' did not 'matter very much' given the 'power in this story, and sincerity, and honest, vigorous writing'.<sup>226</sup> Yet while easily dismissible, the metaphor of the love triangle was a key narrative strategy employed to evoke the pain of internecine strife. Paul and his childhood friend Milo Burke both find themselves drawn to the feisty Rosaleen O'Shea who smokes cigarettes behind the nuns' backs and flouts gender boundaries by arriving at the male-only IRA training camp on the same day as de Valera's much anticipated visit. Early in the novel, 'Rosaleen stood in the middle, one hand on Paul's shoulder, the other on Milo's. Dragging the boys closer together, she stepped back a bit. They felt her affectionate face between their shoulders'.<sup>227</sup> This triangle foreshadows the split between the two friends, as Milo Burke joins the Free State army and Paul sides with the republicans.

Higonnet contends that civil war fictions internationally are particularly preoccupied by the 'metaphoric transfer of conflict from a military to a psychological plane, linking violent death to erotic 'death' and defeated love'.<sup>228</sup> Clair Wills has similarly observed that Irish popular novelists frequently employed 'the trope of brothers divided or love triangles to focus on the issue of the civil war'.<sup>229</sup> As narratologist Patrick Hogan outlines in his perceptive

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<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>225</sup> Evelyn Cobley, 'Narrating the Facts of War: New Journalism in Herr's "Dispatches" and Documentary Realism in First World War Novels', *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 16, no. 2 (1986), pp 97–116.

<sup>226</sup> *Irish Press*, 17 July 1934, p. 2.

<sup>227</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 25.

<sup>228</sup> Margaret R. Higonnet, 'Civil Wars and Sexual Territories', in Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Munich, and Susan Merrill Squier (eds), *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), p. 95; p. 85.

<sup>229</sup> Clair Wills, *Dublin 1916: The Siege of the GPO* (Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 236.

analysis of his namesake Patrick Hogan's autofictional revolutionary novel *Camps on the Hearthstone* (1956):

Perhaps the most common structure for national allegory is a sort of love triangle. The nation is represented as a man or woman and different possibilities for national development, different political directions, are represented as rival suitors for the love of that man or woman.<sup>230</sup>

In Hogan's novel, the protagonist finds himself between two suitors – Norah, a working-class Dubliner, and Kathleen, a middle-class Gaelic Leaguer. As Hogan illustrates, Norah's name evokes Ibsen's Norah, while Kathleen represents Kathleen Ní Houlihan. The protagonist's final decision to reject Norah and pursue Kathleen as a suitor thus functions as an allegory for the protagonist's choice to put the utopian nationalistic dreams of the nation before more socialist aims. Hogan's novel is unusual in its adoption of a female/male/female triangle.<sup>231</sup> More typical in civil war novels is the male/female/male homosocial triangle in which males compete for an often passively rendered female. This particular trope locates the female figure at the root of the romantic (and military) conflict and thus mirrors the widespread vilification of political women for initiating the slide to civil war due to their strong opposition to the treaty. O'Donnell's aforementioned novel, *The Knife*, also draws on the romance triangle to point to political choice, as the unusually strongminded female protagonist, Nuala Dhu Godfrey, rejects the advances of Free State officer Dan Sweeney, in favour of the Orangeman, Sam Rowan.

Like the female characters in Hogan's novel, Rosaleen O'Shea clearly evokes the allegorical personification of Ireland as 'Dark Rosaleen'. However, in this case, Paul must reconcile his 'love for Rosaleen with his duty to the national cause'.<sup>232</sup> In light of the fact that he can only marry Rosaleen in the Catholic Church if he renounces his loyalties to the Republic, he must choose between Rosaleen O'Shea or 'Dark Rosaleen'. He is drawn towards the latter, and paradoxically withdraws from Rosaleen O'Shea in order to continue waging war in the cause of her allegorical namesake. As his dismay increases, Paul's mistreatment of Rosaleen

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<sup>230</sup> Patrick Colm Hogan, 'Revolution and Despair: Allegories of Nation and Class in Patrick Hogan's *Camps on the Hearthstone*', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 25, no. 1/2 (1999), p. 183.

<sup>231</sup> See Carole Veldman-Genz 'The More the Merrier: Transformations of the Love Triangle Across the Romance', in Sarah S. G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger (eds), *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction: Critical Essays* (McFarland, 2014), pp 108–120.

<sup>232</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 181.

becomes a source of regret; 'after his rotten behaviour towards Rosaleen, he could not very well criticize others.'<sup>233</sup>

The breakup of the love triangle comes quickly in *Legion of the Rearguard* as Milo Burke proposes to Paul's sister, Grace. Yet, aside from evoking intense emotions, the plot also enabled Carty to sensitively portray Paul's childhood bestfriend and Free State officer Milo Burke. As a counterbalance to Paul, the narrator voices Burke's internal concerns and doubts about his acceptance of the treaty:

From Milo Burke's standpoint, things looked almost as bad. On his appointment to the command of Tassagh, Milo had confidently hoped for a speedy and complete triumph. He had pictured himself happily married to Grace, an officer of high rank in the National Army, helping to build up the new state and put the country on its feet. [...] Then, instead of petering out, as he anticipated, the stupid struggle kept dragging on...<sup>234</sup>

As is characteristic of many soldiers' testimonies, Carty strongly identifies with his opponent (this trope is further explored in Chapter Five). Nevertheless, Carty's concerted effort to present a reconciliatory picture of the civil war arguably involves the repression and sanitisation of certain aspects of his own experience. Most notably, Carty chose not to fictionally recreate the Killurin train ambush on 24 July 1922. When Carty and some 60 fellow republican prisoners were being transported from Wexford to Dublin, a column of republicans ambushed the train in an attempt to break them out. The half-an-hour long ambush was particularly devastating in terms of loss of life. Carty believed that eight Free State officers were killed (although records suggest there were in fact only three Free State casualties).<sup>235</sup> Carty was involved in the planning of the ambush, and even had his mother smuggle him a carriage key so that the republican prisoners could escape from the train. However, Carty never used the key, fearing it was too risky as 'it would mean passing down the embankment through the ranks of the Free State soldiers'.<sup>236</sup> The ambush led to repercussions and on arrival in Dublin, the IRA prisoners were 'lined up against the wall' and shot at, leading to one death. Carty recalls that Seán Gallagher identified him in 'a sneering voice':

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<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*, pp 185–186.

<sup>235</sup> Ó Maonaigh reports the deaths of two Free State soldiers during the ambush, Corporal Thomas McMahon and Private Maurice Quirke. Another officer, seventeen-year-old Private Michael Campion, died from injuries sustained some days later. 'The Killurin Ambush 1922 and the Civil War in Wexford', *The Irish Story* (blog), 16 October 2018, available at: <http://www.theirishstory.com/2018/10/16/the-killurin-ambush-1922-and-the-civil-war-in-wexford/> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>236</sup> Carty, 'Witness Statement', p. 35.

Fire was then opened on us by Bolster, Gallagher and a number of Free State soldiers. I do not think that we were fired on direct. I remember seeing some of the officers flashing their revolvers towards the pavement and sending out ricochet bullets. One of the prisoners was, however, injured and died subsequently, and on the following morning I found a flattened revolver bullet in the heel of the boot of one of the men who had been beside me.<sup>237</sup>

Seán Gallagher, his 'nemesis', figured vividly in the memories Carty shared with his family. As Francis Xavier Carty recounts: 'Mother and Father were walking down Grafton Street in Dublin when Father suddenly froze and a look of horror came into his face. Mother could not understand. 'Seán Gallagher,' he said,' has just passed by. He is the man who twice tried to shoot me.'<sup>238</sup> The fictional character of Milo Burke is redolent of Gallagher; the description of Burke's reluctant surrender at Tassagh, 'due to water shortages', is reminiscent of Gallagher's refusal to surrender after the siege of Enniscorthy until his garrison were compelled to 'through lack of food and water'.<sup>239</sup> By voicing Burke's interior thoughts in the novel, however, Carty gives voice to the motivations of his opponents, as Burke ponders 'Who can say whether he who fights for the nation – the people – or he who fights for an abstract ideal of nationality, is the better patriot?'<sup>240</sup> As one reviewer observed, Carty could have 'written a novel, with Milo Burke, the National Army Officer, as the hero'.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, Burke's marriage to Paul's sister, Grace, unites the two opponents through blood and points to the need for rekindling relationships in the aftermath of the conflict.

The novel's closing sentence further affirms Paul's decision to make amends after his release from internment: 'He got out his bicycle after tea and rode down to visit Rosaleen...'<sup>242</sup> This closing sentence, followed by an ellipse, signals not only the end of the conflict, but also Paul's break from the allure of ideological nationalist allegories, and the prisoner's reintegration into civilian and family life. Tal identifies a similar search for a 'mythical healing female' in testimonies of soldiers from Vietnam.<sup>243</sup> However she cautions that for many, '[s]uch a homecoming as they might wish for is always unreachable, because it is based on returning not only to a place, but to a time when they were innocent of war—the pre-trauma

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<sup>237</sup> *ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>238</sup> Xavier Carty, *Bruises, Baws and Bastards*, p. 132.

<sup>239</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 121; Carty, 'Witness Statement', p. 31.

<sup>240</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 117.

<sup>241</sup> D. S., 'Story of Irish Civil War: Mr Carty's Novel', *Irish Independent*, 24 July 1934, p. 3.

<sup>242</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 272.

<sup>243</sup> Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 103.

state'.<sup>244</sup> Whether returning to civilian life was as straightforward or not for the author, *Legion of the Rearguard* attests to a desire for narrative closure through its clear demarcation between past and present. This is at odds with many published republican memoirs which often end with a reassertion of the author's republican allegiances and commitment to the continued struggle.

### Carty's Never-Ending Memory-Searching

For Jensen, '[a]utobiographical narratives composed in the aftermath of traumatic experience are part of that compulsion to resolve what cannot be resolved, to generate meaning, knowledge, and justice in the context of trauma'.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, Carty's memory-searching project lasted throughout his life. In addition to the novels, he wrote a story 'A Successful Business Man' in 1935 dealing 'with the troubled times'.<sup>246</sup> Some weeks before his death, he was still working on an unpublished, fictional work entitled 'Blood in the Main Street', which Francis Xavier Carty believes was 'based on the independence struggle in Wexford to June 1921'.<sup>247</sup> His son further attests to his re-occurring 'alimentary' imperative to 'tell', noting that 'he used [to] tell us on Sunday mornings about his part in the War of Independence. We were sometimes bored by the repetition'.<sup>248</sup>

If this need to tell is accompanied by the need to find a 'confirming' readership, the question of audience for many popular revolutionary novels was complicated by the fact that many of them were published by English publishers and thus often directed at international audiences, as much as at Irish readers. Carty's publishers, the reputable J. M. Dent & Sons, had recently published Rearden Conner's highly successful semi-autobiographical revolutionary novel, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (1933).<sup>249</sup> Whereas Conner's novel became a book club

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<sup>244</sup> *ibid*, p. 87.

<sup>245</sup> Meg Jensen, *The Art and Science of Trauma and the Autobiographical: Negotiated Truths* (Springer, 2019), p. 6.

<sup>246</sup> *Irish Press*, 18 December 1935, p. 7. Carty also pitched a third novel to Dent press entitled 'Man Without Guile'; the publishers felt, however, it could not be 'profitably published'. J.M. Dent & Sons Records at Wilson Special Collections Library, 6 January 1938. According to Francis Xavier Carty, this novel related to Carty's father's hair salon and newsagent shop at 2a North Main Street, Wexford, founded in 1896. Email to author, 21 October 2019.

<sup>247</sup> Carty, *Bruises, Baws and Bastards*, 2017.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid*, p. 169.

<sup>249</sup> Founded in 1834, Dent & Sons achieved success by publishing cheap editions of classics as part of the Everyman's Library. These included works by Jane Austen, Henry Melville and Joseph Conrad. J. M. Dent also took an interest in Irish topics. In 1924, it published *A First Irish book*, by Mrs. Cruise O'Brien, as part of its Modern Language Series. Darrell Figgis worked as an editor for Dent in London between 1911 and 1913, and the press also published a number of Patricia Lynch's children's stories.

choice in America and was later translated to the screen,<sup>250</sup> it was censored in Ireland and dismissed for catering for 'a certain market in England [...] for unpleasant books about Ireland'.<sup>251</sup> (This is further discussed in Chapter Four.) Carty, however, distanced himself from such authors who 'worked with one eye on England and the other on America' and 'traded largely on lust and secured their effects with sanguinary oaths and scenes of violence'.<sup>252</sup> A number of points of dramatic irony in Carty's novel suggest, moreover, that he was writing with an intimate audience in mind, perhaps his former colleagues, many of whom were 'away in Wales' by the time of writing.<sup>253</sup> For example, the narrator denounces gun-running against the orders of GHQ as if 'every brigade started gun-running, sources of supply and means of transit would be endangered'.<sup>254</sup> However, Carty himself organised such an operation in defiance of orders and sent two men to Salisbury Plains in England where they retrieved 30 rifles.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, Paul disciplines his men for the 'blackguardism' of raiding banks,<sup>256</sup> although Carty admits to raiding a number of banks himself, albeit in IRA sanctioned operations.<sup>257</sup>

Nevertheless, *Legion of the Rearguard* proved highly successful both in Ireland and abroad. Carty was awarded a Silver Medal at the 1932 Tailteann Literary Awards for a novel entitled 'The Volunteer' which was perhaps a first draft of the two novels. Judged by Daniel Corkery, Mr Compton MacKenzie and Mr Lynn Doyle, it was praised for its 'contribution to the history of Irish village life [...] particularly in the years 1916–1922'.<sup>258</sup> The novels were well received in reviews internationally; *The Irish Volunteer* was considered 'one of the best pictures of the Irish revolution that has yet appeared',<sup>259</sup> was reissued in a cheaper edition due to high sales, and serialised in *The Irish Press*.<sup>260</sup>

Carty's literary aesthetic, although never perfected, connected more to the developing body of revolutionary writing of O'Faoláin and O'Connor – who published *Midsummer Night Madness And Other Stories* and *Guests of the Nation* in 1932 and 1931, respectively – in its

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<sup>250</sup> Robert Hogan, *Macmillan Dictionary of Irish Literature* (Macmillan International Higher Education, 2016), p. 171.

<sup>251</sup> *Irish Book Lover*, July–August 1934, p. 99.

<sup>252</sup> 'Modern Irish Novels, Dependence Upon Outside Readers, Lecture By Mr. Frank Carty', *The Irish Times*, 3 December 1934.

<sup>253</sup> Military Archives, IRA Nominal Rolls, RO/546.

<sup>254</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 36.

<sup>255</sup> Carty, 'Witness Statement', p. 24.

<sup>256</sup> Carty, *The Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 102

<sup>257</sup> Carty, 'Witness Statement', p. 29.

<sup>258</sup> *Irish Press*, 1 July 1932, p. 2.

<sup>259</sup> A quote from *The Irish Independent* printed on the cover of *The Irish Volunteer* (1932).

<sup>260</sup> Letter from J. M. Dent & Sons to Messrs. Curtis Brown Ltd, 22 November 1933, Dent Press Archive, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

realist, unromantic portrayal of the revolutionary period than to the redemptive republicanism of O'Donnell in *The Gates Flew Open*. Nevertheless, Carty was not considered among the writers identified by O'Faoláin in 1935 as the 'representatives of a brutal literature of despair'.<sup>261</sup> As Paul Delaney contends, 'this attempt at canonical formation proved deeply influential and helped to shape the ways in which subsequent generations of readers viewed the cultural history of the Free State'.<sup>262</sup> Carty's continued loyalty to Corkery was arguably at odds with O'Faoláin who opposed the 'nativist' views of his mentor. This difference in viewpoint was evident as far back as September 1924, when O'Faoláin objected to a number of articles by Frank Gallagher on the so-called 'Volunteer Spirit' on the pages of *Sinn Féin*. O'Faoláin complained that the 'reiteration of Propaganda is offensive' and suggested 'that it was time for Irish republicanism to formulate an integrated policy and expend its energies on issues of pressing concern, such as poverty, schooling, and the language revival'.<sup>263</sup> Refuting O'Faoláin, Carty contributed to the debate that '[t]he fundamental principles of nationality cannot be too often or too loudly insisted upon [...] Our people in 1922 and often before followed men like the pro-treaty leaders who preached lies and withheld facts, they have so often believed falsehoods about nationalists and acted according to such beliefs with such disastrous consequences, that we cannot repeat too often the fundamental principles of our national faith'.<sup>264</sup> Nevertheless, Carty's literary project was far from the 'isolationist, Sinn Féinish approach'<sup>265</sup> that Richard English associates with much early-twentieth century Irish republicanism. His writings, moreover, are better understood as part of the canon of interwar literature: for British author and communist activist Helen Gosse, Carty's *The Irish Volunteer* was akin to Ralph Hale Mottram's *The Spanish Farm Trilogy* (1924) which offered intimate portraits of the First World War from a civilian perspective based on the author's experience in France and Flanders.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Seán O'Faoláin, 'Books Of The Week: The Re-Orientation Of Irish Letters', *The Irish Times*, 21 September 1935, p. 7.

<sup>262</sup> Paul Delaney, *Seán O'Faoláin: Literature, Inheritance and the 1930s* (Irish Academic Press, 2014), p. 31.

<sup>263</sup> Quoted in Delaney, *Seán O'Faoláin*, p. 89.

<sup>264</sup> Francis Carty, 'Is Nationality to be Taken for Granted? Author Reply to Seán O'Faoláin' *Sinn Féin*, 1924 [undated]. From personal papers of F. X. Carty.

<sup>265</sup> English, *Ernie O'Malley* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 164.

<sup>266</sup> Helen Gosse, *Fortnightly Review*, April 1932, p. 542.

## Shouting Instead of Whispering: Patrick Mulloy's *Jackets Green*

Patrick Mulloy's 1936 novel, *Jackets Green: a novel*, is less mellow, sanitised and forgiving than Carty's testimony. Rather than advance reconciliation, the restorative potential of Mulloy's fictionalised testimony is connected to his avowed commitment to truth-telling and his employment of a naturalist-realist aesthetic to confront the full gamut of war's horrors and disillusionments. The novel tells the stories of three friends – Tim, Mike and Dan – who develop strong ties of comradeship while imprisoned in an unnamed camp in the North during the war of independence, only to find their paths diverge during the civil war. Mulloy's novel too fell foul of Seán Ó Faoláin who observed that in 'the divisions caused by the Civil War, Mr. Mulloy finds the material for his comment on the cruelty of all idealism. The trouble is that he shouts it instead of whispering it'.<sup>267</sup> In fact, Ó Faoláin shared his scepticism of Mulloy's aesthetic in no less than three separate reviews, considering it to be 'the Troubles *sans phrases*' and 'overbrutally done'.<sup>268</sup> It was not the sense of disillusion portrayed that caused him concern, nor Mulloy's ability as a writer, but rather his lack of restraint. As Ó Faoláin highlighted in a review of Jake Wynne's similarly brutal civil war novel, *Ugly Brew* (1936), there was little doubt about their authenticity: 'If we are so fond of realism, here it is. It all sounds true enough to me, and we do not, I trust, wish to fool ourselves into thinking that such things as war can ever be pretty, or that ideals can be defended by fine speeches and elegant behaviour'.<sup>269</sup>

Mulloy's novel was one of the first to 'look at the Civil War period from the point of view of the young Free State army officer'.<sup>270</sup> As Anne Dolan has illustrated, commemorating the pro-treaty victory in the civil war was more 'troubled' than anti-treaty commemoration, illustrated by the fact that even the Cumann na nGaedheal government was hesitant to commemorate the Free State dead.<sup>271</sup> Mulloy thus had fewer narrative templates at his disposal through which to relay his experience. In his original (unpublished) introduction to the novel, he attempted to distance himself from the more hagiographical accounts of revolutionary martyrs and leaders endorsed by both pro- and anti-treatyites, specifying that it was not 'a story of a Movement; nor of martyrs – nor of heroes'.<sup>272</sup> Disillusioned with 'blind patriotism', the

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<sup>267</sup> Seán Ó Faoláin, 'Fiction', *The Spectator*, 6 March 1936, Volume 156, p. 414.

<sup>268</sup> Seán Ó Faoláin, 'Book Section', *Ireland To-day*, June 1936, p. 75.

<sup>269</sup> Seán Ó Faoláin, 'Book Section', *Ireland To-day*, July 1936, p. 72.

<sup>270</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>271</sup> Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923–2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>272</sup> *Jackets Green*, Typescript of a Novel by Fionn O'Malley (Pseud., i.e. Patrick Mulloy), Published in London, 1936', National Library of Ireland, Ms. 2142.

novel was specifically intended to counter official historiography; Mulloy aimed not to write about 'leaders' as 'history records them', and instead presented the novel as 'a straightforward story of the rank and file', 'a tale of plain people caught in the mad whirl of revolution'.<sup>273</sup>

Mulloy was probably never invited to submit a statement to the Bureau of Military History. However, biographical details affirm the strong similarities between the author and Tim, the novel's survivor-protagonist. A native of Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Mulloy joined the Volunteers as a teenager and spent much of the independence period imprisoned in Ballykinlar camp, Co. Down – just like his fictional characters.<sup>274</sup> Many of these prisoners were rounded up in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday in November 1920, and were interned until 9 December 1921, just days after the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty. In February 1922, Mulloy joined the Free State army at Beggar's Bush and by November had been appointed to the rank of captain at the age of just twenty.<sup>275</sup> Stationed at Baldonnell aerodrome in March 1924, Mulloy supported the army mutiny led by Army Director of Intelligence Charlie Dalton and Liam Tobin. The mutineers delivered an ultimatum to the government in response to army demobilisation, demanding the resignation of the Army Council and that steps be taken towards Michael Collins' ideal of an all-Ireland Republic. Mulloy was one of over 300 'absconders' to walk out with their arms.<sup>276</sup> After tensions abated – and after handing back his gun – Mulloy became a clerk in the Department of Agriculture. However, the civil war split had caused a longstanding rift in Mulloy's own family.<sup>277</sup> Before long, he relocated to London where he was employed at the Irish Free State High Commissioner's Office and Irish Embassy for 36 years.<sup>278</sup> 'Lonely' when he first emigrated, he set up the Irish Club in Eaton Square which he managed with 'fatherly care' for the rest of his life.<sup>279</sup> Through the club, he became a 'well-known member of the Irish community' in London. He regularly contributed to the London-Irish weekly paper, the *Irish Leader*, and earned a reputation as a prize-winning playwright and children's author.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> *Irish Independent*, 9 December 1936, p 8; 'An Irishman in London', *Ulster Herald*, 23 December 1950, p. 7; Liam Ó Duibhir, 'Appendix 2; List of Internees in Ballykinlar No. 2 Compound: Dublin', *Prisoners of War: Ballykinlar, An Irish Internment Camp 1920–1921* (Mercier Press Ltd, 2013), p. 307.

<sup>275</sup> National Army Census, Military Archive of Ireland, 12–13 November 1922. Mulloy is registered under Joseph Mulloy at his address of 106 Lr. George St., Dún Laoghaire.

<sup>276</sup> Des Hickey 'How Colonels almost took over!', *Sunday Independent*, 22 September 1974, p. 13.

<sup>277</sup> I am grateful to Gareth Mulloy, son of Patrick Mulloy, for this information.

<sup>278</sup> 'Irish Author Engaged', *Irish Independent*, 9 December 1936, p. 8.

<sup>279</sup> 'An Irishman in London', *Ulster Herald*, 23 December 1950, p. 7.

<sup>280</sup> *Irish Examiner*, 21 January 1978, p. 9.

While Allen contends that the novel 'represents the Free State perspective'<sup>281</sup>, Mulloy's novel is arguably less of an endorsement of the Free State side and more a protest against the sufferings caused of war more generally. His testimony sheds light on the traumas experienced by tortured republican prisoners as much as it does on the agonising powerlessness of Free State soldiers. Yet, like O'Donnell's testimony, these experiences are placed in a global context; *Jackets Green* is dedicated to 'the rank and file of every national movement and secret society in every country to remind them that many a path of glory leads to a graveyard of souls'.<sup>282</sup> From the outset, therefore, Mulloy delivers a bleak prophecy of death and sets out to graphically illustrate the tragic consequences of war as a warning for future generations. In doing so, he does not hold back from taboos such as the mental strain of the conflict, the soldiers' recourse to alcoholism and prostitution, and even hints at homosexuality in the prisons. While he admitted that it was 'unpleasant' to write, Mulloy included a paratextual contract of truthfulness in his original preface to the novel, contending that '[a]ll the incidents related are true, the entire story being based on a series of true incidents, which have come within the author's personal experience'.<sup>283</sup> Paradoxically, however, Mulloy originally intended to publish the novel under the pseudonym Fionn O'Malley, illustrating thus 'the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy' often associated with stories of trauma.<sup>284</sup>

This determination to set the historical record straight is similarly outlined in the prefaces of numerous First World War autobiographical novels, such as the aforementioned writings of Mottram. According to Cobley, these authors were generally 'convinced that the horrors of war were best conveyed through the presentation of unadorned fact' and that the 'accurate reproduction of factual knowledge' upheld their claims of truth-telling.<sup>285</sup> However, Mulloy's documentary descriptions of violent scenes also tested the boundaries of realism. Tim witnesses '[s]omething dripped from overhead' only to discover that 'the telegraph wires were festooned with human intestine' after a mine explosion. He sees '[b]its of a tender were strewn like matchwood, while little rivulets of blood streamed across the road and trickled into a sewer'.<sup>286</sup> O'Faoláin took particular offence at this graphic description, while for reviewer and author Francis Mac Manus, *Jackets Green* was 'realist but quite unreal'.<sup>287</sup> In this sense Mulloy's aesthetic evokes Rothberg's concept of 'traumatic realism' defined as 'a realism in

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<sup>281</sup> Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War*, p. 196.

<sup>282</sup> *Jackets Green*, Typescript of a Novel by Fionn O'Malley', NLI, Ms. 2142.

<sup>283</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (BasicBooks, 1992), p. 1.

<sup>285</sup> Cobley, 'Narrating the Facts of War', p. 100.

<sup>286</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 311.

<sup>287</sup> Francis Mac Manus, [Review of *Jackets Green*], *Irish Press*, 10 March 1936, p. 6.

which the claims of reference live on, but so does the traumatic extremity that disables realist representation as usual'.<sup>288</sup> This grisly realism risks evoking ethical discomfort among readers as the lines can be blurred 'between the didacticism of educating readers about the horrors of the battlefields and the enticement that stems from drawing on extreme emotions'.<sup>289</sup>

This ethical discomfort is reflected in the persistent concerns of nationalist commentators regarding the perceived appeal of 'unpleasant' books about Ireland among English readers. Like Carty's novel, *Jackets Green* was published in London; this time by Grayson and Grayson who had previously published Liam O'Flaherty's autobiography *Shame the Devil* (1934) and Ó Faoláin's short story, *There's a Birdie in the Cage* (1935). Nevertheless, Mulloy's graphic, take-no-prisoners approach was perhaps more successful in appealing to both sides of the treaty divide than the testimonies of O'Donnell and Carty. As Norah Hoult argued in her review of the novel, 'this is a vigorous very much alive book, in which the author has no axe to grind, and is refreshingly detached'.<sup>290</sup> Writing in the *Irish Press* on Mulloy's death, A. O'R, who worked with Mulloy in the civil service from 1924, also recalled that the author was 'highly popular with all his colleagues, despite the prejudices arising out of the Civil War'.<sup>291</sup>

### Subverting the Gender Norms Of Prison Life

*Jackets Green* opens with the arrest of Tim from his family home. Nationalist representations of the revolution are immediately challenged as Tim's mother clings to a shrapnel helmet which belonged to her son who was killed in France. Far from embodying patriotic motherhood, she exclaims that 'no mother is proud when she's told that her son has been killed'.<sup>292</sup> The novelist further defies popular degrading stereotypes of British army officers as Tim, Dan and Mick play pontoon with the Auxiliaries who imprison them.<sup>293</sup> When the convoy in which they are travelling is ambushed, Dan also comes to the aid of a wounded Auxiliary. Shortly hereafter, however, the prisoners are transferred by tender to an unnamed camp in the North. As they dismount, they are surrounded by a 'howling, leering mob' who

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<sup>288</sup> Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, p. 406.

<sup>289</sup> Gerd Bayer, 'Trauma and the Literature of War', in J. Roger Kurtz (ed.), *Trauma and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 213.

<sup>290</sup> Nora Hoult, Review of *Jackets Green* and *Benson's Flying Column*, *The Dublin Magazine: A Quarterly Review of Literature, Science and Art*, April–June 1936, p. 101.

<sup>291</sup> 'Mr. Pat Mulloy: An appreciation', *Irish Press*, 30 January, 1978, p. 7.

<sup>292</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 10.

<sup>293</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

shower them with sectarian abuse: 'Hell roast the Pope!'<sup>294</sup> Ironically, officers from 'His Majesty's Forces' protect the prisoners from the rowdy crowds in Belfast who 'booed and waved Union Jacks'.<sup>295</sup> When they finally arrived at their destination, they understand they 'must be for the new internment camp'.<sup>296</sup>

Although the camp is not mentioned by name, the descriptions of such rioting – referred to in contemporary accounts as 'Belfast confetti' – indicate that the fictional camp is directly based on Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down, where Mulloy was a prisoner.<sup>297</sup> Many of the incidents described can be verified by other veterans' accounts. Much of the prison section revolves around attempts to conceal Dan's identity, as he is ordered back to Dublin 'for trial for high treason' on the orders of Igo, who is possibly based on Head Constable Eugene Igoe.<sup>298</sup> Mick pretends to be Dan and is sent back to Dublin – only to be sent back to the camp again after his identity is revealed. On another occasion, the prisoners escape from their locked hut through a back window to prevent Dan being 'shifted'. Later, Dan is rather humorously added to the sick parade and thus 'on the run' within the prison camp. All these methods of concealing prisoners were a feature of Ballykinlar, Camp II, as outlined by Francis O'Duffy in his statement to the Bureau of Military History:

There were a number of persons among the prisoners who had been active Volunteers and were wanted by the British on serious charges, e.g. Dublin Volunteers who had taken part in the Mount Street attack on the British Intelligence Officers. The principal plan adopted in Camp II to safeguard these prisoners was to get them to change identity with other prisoners, if possible, persons who resembled them in appearance. In some cases a double exchange was made: A became B, B became C, and C became A.<sup>299</sup>

In the novel, the prisoners also attempt a number of escapes, including through a tunnel. Their plan is thwarted, however, as another group of prisoners beats them to it. The tunnel, as documented in other accounts, was subsequently discovered by camp officials due to increased vigilance.<sup>300</sup> Another plan was to crawl out under the barbed wire during a football match with

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<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>295</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>297</sup> On Belfast confetti, see William Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912–1921* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>298</sup> Eugene Igoe was a Mayo-born RIC officer who coordinated the Igoe gang, a group of Irish-born RIC officers who patrolled Dublin in plain clothes on the lookout for wanted men.

<sup>299</sup> Francis O'Duffy, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 665, 1 April 1952, p. 5.

<sup>300</sup> See Ó Duibhir, *Prisoners of War*, p. 201.

the crowd blocking the sentry's view. This attempt again fails as the escapees are spotted by an orderly as they crawled through the grass. Mick sees 'the ground in front of them was lighted up by the brilliant glare of the searchlight; a ring of fixed bayonets was pointed in their direction; the camp sirens shrieked'.<sup>301</sup> O'Duffy also documents an elaborate escape plan from the recreation field in his witness statement:

The plan worked without a hitch. The escaping men had crossed the recreation field and cut their way through the boundary fence undetected, when they were accidentally discovered by the British Camp Commandant (Colonel Innes). He was walking alone around the outside of the camp to visit the sentry posts, and walked on one of the escaped men, who were trying to hide in the long grass. He raised the alarm at once and the powerful search-lights were turned on; we then knew that the attempt had failed.<sup>302</sup>

Whether or not Mulloy was one of the party of five who attempted this escape, the fictional account is clearly based on the same account described by O'Duffy.

The novel also includes small details of prison life that add to contemporary accounts; the prisoners drink out of condensed milk tins called 'Charlie Bakers'; sing songs such as 'Tim Muggin's Ass', use the handles of bread knives to make rings out of coins, and tie twine together to make bags.<sup>303</sup> These 'domestic' details shed light on the ambivalences of carceral masculinity. This subversion of gender norms is illustrated in the way men frequently dressed up as 'ladies' for dramatic purposes in internment camps. As Joanna Bruck observes in her study of Irish internment camp craftwork, 'camp theatricals eroticised the male body by allowing the normative boundaries of masculinity to be challenged and transgressed'.<sup>304</sup> However, while craftwork and cross-dressing appear in letters and camp memorabilia, Mulloy's novel further elucidates a more taboo aspect of this ambivalent masculinity: the possibility of homosexual relationships between prisoners. Tim confides to Dan that 'a fellow in a hunt near us tries to treat me like one [a woman]'. His fellow prisoner 'starts pawing me and putting his arms around me, and calling me 'dear' and 'darling' and all sorts of silly names like that'. He also tries to shift Tim into his hut, which shocks Dan:

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<sup>301</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 154.

<sup>302</sup> O'Duffy, 'Witness Statement', p. 16.

<sup>303</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 122.

<sup>304</sup> Joanna Bruck, 'A Good Irishman Should Blush Every Time He Sees a Penny': Gender, Nationalism and Memory in Irish Internment Camp Craftwork, 1916–1923', *Journal of Material Culture*, 20(2), p. 162.

'He didn't want yeh ta sleep with him, be any chance?' asked Dan.

'I think that's what he wanted me to shift into his hut for.'<sup>305</sup>

Mulloy's reference to homosexuality may not only reflect on the lived experience of IRA internees, it also unsettles nationalist narratives which foregrounded the heroic, hypermasculinity of IRA internees. Patrick Hannifin argues that the promotion of normative heterosexual masculinity on the establishment of the Free State was an attempt by the postcolonial elite to 'posit an idea of a pure Irish self, uncontaminated by colonial or other polluting forces'.<sup>306</sup>

While much of the prison section of the novel is light-hearted, Mulloy also bears witness to mental strain caused by camp life and the shooting of prisoners by sentries:

'We've had enough of this camp.'

'Let's burn it.'

'Yes, burn the bloody kipp to the ground.'

'We'll be mowed down.'

'Let them mow us down – we'll be shot one by one, anyhow.'

'Three have been shot already.'

'Seven have died because they couldn't stick it.'

'One went mad.'<sup>307</sup>

Indeed, a number of prisoners in Ballykinlar were diagnosed for neurasthenia; these included one man who was kept in a guardroom for weeks before being released to Richmond psychiatric hospital.<sup>308</sup> The shooting of three IRA prisoners is also likely a reference to the deaths of Joseph Tormey and Patrick Sloane (17 January 1921) and Tadhg Barry (15 November 1921). Cork Volunteer Tadhg Barry's death in particular engendered public outrage. As William Murphy notes, 'Barry was killed by Private A. Barrett, a sentry, who claimed to have fired because he believed Barry was about to make a dash for freedom through the compound gate. A guard at the gate supported Barrett's account, but it was rejected by internee

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<sup>305</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 139.

<sup>306</sup> Patrick Hannifin, 'Rewriting Desire: The Construction of Sexual Identity in Legal and Literary Discourse in Postcolonial Ireland', in Didi Herman and Carl Stychin (eds), *Sexuality in the Legal Arena* (A&C Black, 2000), p. 52.

<sup>307</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 159.

<sup>308</sup> Ó Duibhir, *Prisoners of War: Ballykinlar*, p. 90.

witnesses'.<sup>309</sup> In the novel, Mulloy focuses not on the contentious circumstances of the prisoner's death, but rather on the traumatic implications of his death on the surviving prisoners:

When they reached the gate, they found a crowd of roughly five hundred prisoners kneeling and mumbling the responses of the rosary around a prisoner lying dead on the ground: shot through the heart by a sentry. Transfixed eyes were staring at the contorted features of a dead comrade, and the last remnants of restraint seemed to have disappeared from the faces around [...] The shooting of a comrade playing heavily on the minds of the prisoners. Their nerves, taut by weary months of imprisonment and deferred hopes, were ready to snap.<sup>310</sup>

In his capacity as a novelist, Mulloy could thus establish himself as the arbiter of inmates' suffering and as a 'moral witness' to his fellow prisoners' dismay.

### **The Civil War: A Graveyard Of Souls**

The second section of the novel relies more forcefully on brutal realism to convey the traumatic effects of civil war. As in Carty's account, the devastating split between friends is illustrated through a love triangle. Throughout his imprisonment, Tim remained in contact with his sweetheart Sheila, but on release in December 1921, she begins to question her affection for him:

Sheila, linked between Dan and Tim, was glancing from one to the other: she loved Tim, she told herself, but Dan attracted her. Tim was a handsome boy, kind, affectionate, and over-anxious to be attentive, while Dan, rugged and weather-beaten, did not appear to take the slightest notice of her presence.<sup>311</sup>

The women in the novel are presented in stereotypical terms as vociferous in their denouncement of the treaty. Tim's sister Maureen claims she is 'ashamed of him' for joining the Free State, while Sheila leaves him for his best friend, Dan, who takes the republican side. There is a sense that the romantic patriotism of the women is ill-informed and nourished by

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<sup>309</sup> Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912–1921*.

<sup>310</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 158.

<sup>311</sup> *ibid*, p. 168.

binary perceptions of the Black and Tans as bloodthirsty savages in contrast to the heroic, saintly Volunteers. Mick disputes such a simplistic view: 'An' what do yeh think our fellows did? [...] Just wait in the ditches wid prayer-books, then sprinkle the tenders wid holy water, an' blow them up in the name a the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, an' expect a plenary indulgence?'<sup>312</sup>

This emphasis on the perpetration of violence by both anti-treaty and pro-treaty officers, willingly or not, defines much of the second section of the novel. Unlike most revolutionary memoirs which legitimise the use of violence, Mulloy's disillusion with the civil war is reflected through the total lack of professionalism of the officers on both sides. While Carty hints at the disruptions and bank robberies carried out by republicans during the civil war, he nevertheless emphasises the overall respectability of the officers. On the other hand, Mulloy feels no such need to defend the actions of either side. Like Carty's novel, the three officers enlist, somewhat blindly, in the Free State army on its foundation. Their total inexperience is reflected in the fact that they don't even know how to put on their tight-fitting uniforms and run home at the first sight of danger.<sup>313</sup>

The overtly masculine experience of wartime violence is accompanied by heavy drinking and sex, as summed up by an ex-British army officer in the Free State army who boasts 'of the battles he had won, of the wine he had drunk, and of the women with whom he had slept'.<sup>314</sup> There are a number of casual references to officers seeking out domestic servants after raids, others are mocked for putting 'some jane in the family way', and the contraction of venereal diseases from prostitutes is also indicated.<sup>315</sup> Women who transgress the gender norms of warfare are equally sexually degraded (as further explored in Chapter Four). On her arrest for carrying arms and despatches for the republicans, Sheila is shamed as a 'bloody whore *de combat*, the dirty little spitfire'.<sup>316</sup> The debasing sexual language is also reflected in the men's actions, as the female prisoner's body becomes a site of further conquest where soldiers can prove themselves. One officer enters Sheila's cell in an attempt to woo her. He emerges dishevelled, while his fellow officers laugh that 'be japres, she nearly tore th' eyes outa him'.<sup>317</sup> Dan similarly mocks the officer for not knowing 'how to handle a judy'.<sup>318</sup> The crude attitude towards the female prisoner, and Sheila's sexual vulnerability, is further illustrated as an officer

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<sup>312</sup> *ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>313</sup> *ibid.*, p. 188, p. 232.

<sup>314</sup> *ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>315</sup> *ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>316</sup> *ibid.*, p. 282.

<sup>317</sup> *ibid.*, p. 282

<sup>318</sup> *ibid.*, p. 283.

calls out to Dan that '[i]f yeh want any square-pushin', do it upstairs. A bed's more comfortable anyhow'.<sup>319</sup>

Nevertheless, the soldiers are presented as having little control over the circumstances which have tragically pitted them against each other. Throughout the novel, Mulloy paints humane sketches of friendships between 'enemies': Dan Broderick assists an injured Black and Tan in an ambush, Tim plays cards with the British officers imprisoning him, and the returned prisoners drink bottles of 'nigger's blood' – a slang for an alcoholic beverage – with a corporal in the British army.<sup>320</sup> As the split becomes more apparent after the outlawing of the IRA Army Convention, a number of officers, like Dan Broderick, trickle back into the ranks of the guerrilla republican army. Nevertheless, Mick, now an officer in the Free State army, continues to visit his republican ex-colleagues, and relationships remain amiable even when republicans imprison Mick and Tim.

For Tim, joining the Free State army means sacrificing his sweetheart, but getting an army uniform 'was the proudest moment of his life'.<sup>321</sup> As the war progresses, however, the officers feel uncomfortable with the tasks being assigned to them. When ordered to reclaim a barracks from a brigade of local republicans, one Free State officer confesses, 'I feel as though I'm taking something that doesn't belong to me: a robbing the dead sort of feeling'.<sup>322</sup> Tim too is dismayed; 'He had visualised flags – parades – colour, not stalking through fields and over mountains hunting and killing their own flesh and blood.'<sup>323</sup> He watches as the newly-acquired authority of the Free State army also goes to officers' heads:

They had come from prisons and camps; some even from the condemned cell; from mountain haunts, from hay-lofts and ditches, from cellars and caves, to be placed in power: they were hysterical with reaction, and though soaked with wine they were drunk with power.<sup>324</sup>

This power translates into senseless killing taken out on the natural world. As Tim observes: 'Nobody quite knew what they were firing at, and when a frightened pheasant rose out of the heather a soldier had a shot at it – just for fun; blood lust was aroused, and it was something to kill.'<sup>325</sup> Violence thus emerges as a natural, almost animalistic consequence of war. The

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<sup>319</sup> *ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>320</sup> *ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>321</sup> *ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>322</sup> *ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>323</sup> *ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>324</sup> *ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>325</sup> *ibid.*, p. 246.

powerlessness of the individual against this collective brutalisation is reflected in Tim's feeble response to the tortures carried out by his fellow officer, Jobson:

Smiling the demonical smile of a sadist, the officer walked towards the prisoner, his Sam Browne belt hanging loosely in his hands. The prisoner recoiled. [...] Before the prisoner could say any more he received the full force of the Sam Browne belt across the face. With a scream he tried to protect himself with his hands, while the officer started to tear off his waistcoat and shirt.<sup>326</sup>

Tim feels he 'could stick no more, but was powerless to interfere'.<sup>327</sup> Although he sends the prisoners to Arbour Hill to prevent them falling victim to Jobson's torture methods, Tim soon finds himself caught up in this spiral of brutality. Raiding homes becomes routine; he no longer paid 'attention to the women's abuse; nor to the little crowd outside; nor to the grubby kids around the door; nor to the pair of hawk-like eyes in the window opposite; nor did he notice the signals when his car moved off'.<sup>328</sup>

Drinking becomes a coping mechanism. Tim previously only drank 'dry ginger', and is even mocked for drinking port, 'a whore's drink'.<sup>329</sup> However, after hearing 'the swish of the Sam Browne and a [prisoner's] scream', he discovers that he 'liked the effect of it. It gave him courage'.<sup>330</sup> By the times of Michael Collins' assassination, Tim had been 'tight nearly every night' for three weeks.<sup>331</sup> The mental strain endured by the soldiers is further expressed by their frequenting of 'digs' or 'kipps' after a night's drinking, where they ridicule a prostitute named Phyllis, contending 'Sy-philis' would be a more appropriate name. (This is further discussed in Chapter Four.) Despite Tim's initial shock that girls could drink or be so forward, he is suddenly overcome by a wild desire 'to see the girl undressed'.<sup>332</sup> However, when the prostitutes sneeringly nickname the officers 'Green and Tans', one officer whips out his revolver and smashes a jug 'into smithereens over the woman's head'.<sup>333</sup> The other officers, including Tim, thrash the brothel when they are refused alcohol:

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<sup>326</sup> *ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>327</sup> *ibid.*, p. 291.

<sup>328</sup> *ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>329</sup> *ibid.*, p. 171, p. 293.

<sup>330</sup> *ibid.*, p. 293.

<sup>331</sup> *ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>332</sup> *ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>333</sup> *ibid.*, p. 305.

Each officer then drew his revolver and started to blaze at everything he could see: cups, saucers, jugs, bottles, lamps, flower vases. Demented and half-naked women rushed into the street screaming at the tops of their voices; men ran out of the houses and finished their dressing as they ran up the street...'<sup>334</sup>

When tasked with bringing his friend, Dan, in front of a 'firing squad', Mick wanders around Grafton St. aimlessly, 'not quite knowing what to do', before he is led away by a prostitute. For Allen, the 'image of the Madonna and child hanging over a brothel bed' symbolises 'civil war's poison of the relations held between sign and salvation'.<sup>335</sup>

The most probable outcome of the 'orgy of sadism' of civil war is death. Sheila is shot in an ambush. Anti-treatyite Dan accidentally shoots his Free State friend, Mick, in what is now a well-established civil war trope.<sup>336</sup> However, Mulloy takes this a step further; when Tim discovers his two friends' dead bodies, circumstances suggest that Dan committed suicide after killing his friend.<sup>337</sup> As Higonnet avers, the 'self-division or inner struggle' in civil war fiction 'may lead to productive change, but far more often in these fictions it leads to inner exile, silence, and suicide'.<sup>338</sup>

The novel's conclusion thus refers back to the aim outlined in the preface to remind readers that 'many a path of glory leads to a graveyard of souls'. Tim emerges as the sole survivor of his direct associates and is the only living witness to tell the tale. However, the conflict has caused much psychological damage. Tim struggles to 'blot out the memory' of the 'ghastly sights' he has witnessed. After Sheila's death in hospital, his 'reaction was hysteria [...] And before anybody could stop him, Tim was chasing through the corridors of the hospital like a frenzied maniac'.<sup>339</sup> Whereas Carty's novel concludes with an optimistic sense of closure marking the re-establishment of social and romantic relationships, Mulloy's closure underscores the distance between the survivor of war and the civilian. Tim's reminiscences of happier days with Dan and Mick are disrupted by the sound of a patriotic tune coming from an upstairs window. There is no sense of 'mythical female healing'. Brutalised and disenchanted by patriotism, Tim screams at the woman in the house above to turn off her gramophone: 'Jesus Christ! Stop it, or I'll kill you!'<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> *ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>335</sup> Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War*, p. 196.

<sup>336</sup> See Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State: 1922–1939* (Penn State Press, 2010), p. 196.

<sup>337</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 330.

<sup>338</sup> Higonnet, 'Civil Wars and Sexual Territories', p. 95.

<sup>339</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 322.

<sup>340</sup> *ibid.*, p. 331.

## Mulloy's Unlistened-To Story

In the first month after its release in March 1936, the sales of *Jackets Green* exceeded Mulloy's expectations. The novel sold nearly six hundred copies in Ireland, made the Dublin bestseller list, and two film companies expressed an interest in the story.<sup>341</sup> However, the novel's success was short lived. Mulloy's 'graveyard of souls' was at odds with the 'brutal literature of despair' advanced by O'Faoláin which 'found a mid-way position between reality and romance', as in the work 'of my friend, Frank O'Connor'.<sup>342</sup> For example, O'Faoláin considered Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*, to be 'one of the grand books of our time' as, despite its brutalism, 'its grandness is essentially romantic'.<sup>343</sup> Indeed, O'Faoláin did not address revolutionary violence head-on in his 1932 collection of stories *Midsummer Night Madness*. Rather, he preferred to shy 'away from depicting the actual moments when the characters are killed and instead chooses to portray death in a distant, oblique or deliberately underdeveloped manner'.<sup>344</sup>

Not only was Mulloy's testimony sidelined from the canon of revolutionary fiction, his novel did not stay long in Irish bookstores. By June, the Irish Censorship Board had banned *Jackets Green*.<sup>345</sup> This was the beginning of a long, painful and financially disastrous battle for Mulloy which lasted until his death, as he strove to defend his novel's merit, revoke its censorship, and republish it. The dismissal of his novel, and particularly the doubting of its authenticity, cut deep. Given that Mulloy sets himself up as a survivor-witness through this novel, he can perhaps be cast in Paul Ricoeur's terms, as a '[witness] who never encounter[s] an audience capable of listening to them or hearing what they have to say'.<sup>346</sup> That his story was told, but not heard, also speaks to Primo Levi's observation of the narrative problem of the 'unlistened-to story' which, although imparted to others, continues to haunt his dreams.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> 'Irishman's Diary: Abbey Actor for U.S.A', *The Irish Times*, 29 April 1936; 'What Dublin Is Reading', *The Irish Times*, 4 July 1936; 'Wants his banned book back in print', *Independent*, 26 May 1968, p. 3.

<sup>342</sup> Seán O'Faoláin, 'Books Of The Week: The Re-Orientation Of Irish Letters', *The Irish Times*, 21 September 1935, p. 7.

<sup>343</sup> Seán Ó'Faoláin, 'Fiction', *The Spectator*, 6 March 1936, Volume 156, p. 414.

<sup>344</sup> Delaney, *Sean O'Faoláin*, p. 157.

<sup>345</sup> 'Banned Books', *The Irish Times*, 10 June 1936.

<sup>346</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 166.

<sup>347</sup> Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in Felman and Laub (eds), *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing*, p. 68.

Although Mulloy speculated that there may have been political reasons for the banning of his testimony<sup>348</sup>, he acknowledged that it was regarded as 'obscene' because of the brothel scenes. As Mulloy sarcastically commented, 'of course, in the island of saints and scholars there were no brothels'.<sup>349</sup> Intriguingly, the censors were not concerned with the brutal descriptions of violence, as, in Mulloy's view, 'the cult of violence had been accepted in Ireland'.<sup>350</sup> Nevertheless, a significant body of fiction relating to the revolutionary period were banned by the Irish Censorship Board. These include Seán Ó Faoláin's *Midsummer Night Madness and others stories* (1932), John Brophy's *The Rocky Road: A Novel* (1932), Liam O'Flaherty's *The Martyr* (1933), Rearden Conner's *Shake Hands with the Devil* (1932), Francis Plunkett's *As the Fool* (1935), Jake Wynne's *The Ugly Brew* (1936), and Jim Phelan's *Lifer* (also containing references to homosexual relationships among prisoners).<sup>351</sup> In the eyes of the Censorship Board, the exploration of the politics of the civil war was arguably less taboo than 'indecent' sexual references. For examples, Wynne's novel, also written from the perspective of a Free State army officer, was censored because, as a reviewer in *The Irish Book Lover* complained, 'patriotism is exploited for the enjoyment of its mockers, and the poor are exploited to provide sordid sex incidents'.<sup>352</sup> Some authors may have welcomed censoring and thus drawn to the controversy of civil war. When Séamus McCall – who participated in the First World War and subsequently fought on the republican side in the civil war – sent his experimental semi-autobiographical novel *Gods in Motley* (1935) to Talbot Press for consideration, the editor confessed that he 'enjoyed [it] very much. But are you not afraid that it will be censored by the Free State?'.<sup>353</sup> Liam O'Flaherty also wrote that his satirical civil war novel, *The Martyr* (discussed in Chapter Four), was composed with the intention to 'stir them up'.<sup>354</sup>

Even though Mulloy could not appeal the decision of the Irish Censorship Board, he defended his novel through a highly publicised case against the Irish edition of the *Daily Express* for defamation. Mulloy took libel action against the newspaper for an article published

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<sup>348</sup> 'Bang Startles Court: Incident In Libel Action', *The Irish Times*, 27 May 1937, p. 4.

<sup>349</sup> Des Hickey, 'How Colonels almost took over!', *Sunday Independent*, 22 September 1974, p. 13.

<sup>350</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>351</sup> See Dónal Ó Drisceoil, 'Appendix A', in Clare Hutton and Patrick Walsh (eds), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English, 1891–2000* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp 644–49.

<sup>352</sup> *Irish Book Lover*, Nov–Dec 1936, p. 123. Cited in Nicholas Allen, 'Reading Revolutions 1922–39', in Hutton and Walsh (eds), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V*, p. 95.

<sup>353</sup> Letter to Séamus Mac Call, 21 November 1934. National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager's Correspondence, 1048/1/134. McCall's novel was ultimately published by Constable Press in London.

<sup>354</sup> Danine Farquharson, 'Liam O'Flaherty's *The Martyr* and the Risks of Satire', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 25, no. 1/2 (1999), p. 386.

on 11 June 1935 that suggested the novel was 'indecent' and reprinted a quote by Mr William Magennis, a professor of the National University of Ireland and a member of the Censorship Board, who claimed that there was not 'a single redeeming feature about the book'. A contentious aspect of the trial was whether 'certain references to sex' – namely 'a reference to homosexuality and a graphic account of scenes in a brothel' – should be considered 'indecent'.<sup>355</sup> The jury found that the article was defamatory of Mr. Mulloy's book, that the statement attributed to Professor Magennis was accurate, that the article was fair criticism of Mr Mulloy's book and that the words complained of – that the book had not a 'single redeeming feature' – were untrue.<sup>356</sup> However, the newspaper pleaded 'fair comment' and Judge Hawkes dismissed the damages of £500 awarded to Mr. Mulloy.<sup>357</sup> Mulloy was thus obliged to pay the defendants' costs of £571 – a ruling he unsuccessfully appealed – and was left almost bankrupt.<sup>358</sup> This decision also led to the false opinion that Mulloy had sued the newspaper for £500, as suggested in an *Irish Times* article in 1945.<sup>359</sup> Mulloy once again defended his novel, and reminded readers that the jury had ruled that 'it was *defamatory and untrue* to say that the book was 'without literary merit'.<sup>360</sup>

The objections to Mulloy's novel – in literary criticism, censorship and in court – underscore the difficulties for combat veterans in negotiating their wartime experience with the social expectations of civilian life. Even the 'coarseness' of language was deemed offensive for the public, to which Mulloy responded that such 'soldiers' talk' was 'most expressive'. When cross-examined, Mulloy, echoing O'Donnell, maintained that the novel could not be considered 'indecent' as it was true to his experience:

Sir Patrick: Do you now feel that there are many passages in the book which would be revolting to many people who consider themselves decent?

[Mr. Mulloy:] They might upset the smugness of people who consider themselves decent. If people do not realise that such things happen, they are smug.

[Sir Patrick]: If there had not been a motive behind this book would it have been indecent?

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<sup>355</sup> 'Author's Libel Action: *Jackets Green* Verdict Judge On 'Women's Rig', *The Irish Times*, 28 May 1937, p. 7.

<sup>356</sup> 'Author's Libel Action, Newspaper Wins, Judge Ruling on Comment', *The Guardian*, 17 Jun 1937, p. 19.

<sup>357</sup> *Jackets Green*, *The Irish Times*, 1 October 1945, p. 3.

<sup>358</sup> 'Irish Author's Appeal', *Irish Times*, 2 April 1938, p. 12; 'Irish Novelist's Appeal: Security To Be Given For Costs', *Irish Times*, 19 October 1937.

<sup>359</sup> 'London Letter', *The Irish Times*, 20 September 1945, p. 3.

<sup>360</sup> '[Letter to the Editor]: *Jackets Green*', *The Irish Times*, 1 October 1945, p. 3.

[Mr. Mulloy:] No, because it is not indecent? It was 'photographic' and was holding up the mirror to nature.

[Sir Patrick]: The indecent side of nature?

[Mr. Mulloy:]: The side of nature that I saw.<sup>361</sup>

When it was suggested to him that 'it was unpleasant' to read extracts of the book 'to a jury on which there were two women', Mulloy responded that, '[i]t was just as unpleasant for me to write'.<sup>362</sup>

The suppression of *Jackets Green* in Ireland thus denied Mulloy a reading public to facilitate the abreaction of trauma and validate his testimony. His continued attempts to find a 'listening community' in Ireland is clear from the fact that he donated the original manuscript of the novel to the National Library in 1947 after carefully guarding it throughout the London Blitz'.<sup>363</sup> Although Mulloy could not convince his publishers to reprint his novel after the ban was finally lifted in 1968, he revisited the civil war in other writings.<sup>364</sup> Most notable, perhaps, was his 1964 civil war play, *Harvest of the Wind*, produced by the Little Theatre Club in Garrick Yard, which is highly reminiscent of *Jackets Green* in plot and characterisation.<sup>365</sup> The play was intentionally written to contest the silence surrounding the conflict, as Mulloy argued that the civil war period had so far been 'eschewed by dramatists', even though 'the conflicts and clashes of character of the time are the very essence of drama, ready made'.<sup>366</sup> In 1975, Mulloy also issued a pamphlet entitled *Mutiny Without Malice*, which detailed his role in the Army Mutiny of 1924. Like the novel, the pamphlet was motivated by a duty to testify, as Mulloy acknowledged he was 'one of the few remaining survivors of the 300 former Free State army officers involved'.<sup>367</sup> While a reviewer in *An Cosantóir*, the official magazine of the Irish

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<sup>361</sup> 'Book Prohibited in Free State: Author's Libel Action Against Newspaper', *The Guardian*, 25 May 1937, p. 7.

<sup>362</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>363</sup> *Jackets Green*, Typescript of a Novel by Fionn O'Malley', NLI, Ms. 2142.

<sup>364</sup> 'Wants his banned book back in print', *Irish Independent*, 26 May 1968, p. 3. Mulloy's other works include the play *Here we dwell* which was performed at Rudolf Steiner Theatre, London, in 1950 and which evoked 'a strong nationalist atmosphere'. His 1964 play, *The Treadmill*, won first prize in a competition sponsored by the Scottish Community Drama Association. The play represents Mulloy's concerns for the social conditions of the London Irish; set in Hampstead, it was described by the author as 'a thriller with a difference'.

<sup>365</sup> My thanks to Gareth Mulloy for providing me with a copy of *Harvest of the Wind*.

<sup>366</sup> *Irish Press*, 27 March 1950, p. 6.

<sup>367</sup> Des Hickey 'How Colonels almost took over!', *Sunday Independent*, 22 September 1974, p. 13. I am very grateful to Gareth Mulloy for providing me a copy of this play.

Defence Force, was unconvinced by Mulloy's 'kindly and benevolent' account, Mulloy was nevertheless credited with challenging officialdom, 'whose technique has been simply to throw a blanket of silence over the whole business and consign it to oblivion'.<sup>368</sup> Even Mulloy's children's writings – described by Brendan Behan as 'excellent'<sup>369</sup> – advocated against violence; his popular illustrated novel, *Andy Tinpockets* (1950), follows the adventures of three young children in Ireland and their outrage against the abuse of farm animals.<sup>370</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the need to address the prevalence of fictionalised testimonies of the civil war that contradict the disabling silence often associated with traumatic experience. It illustrates the need to move beyond the conflation between trauma and the modernist aesthetic and the necessity to take into consideration literary practices of the time, which were informed by wider narratives of European post-war realism or longstanding republican narratives of redemptive trauma. Such overlooked testimonies need to be integrated into academic scholarship, not solely due to their literary merit, but due to their testimonial functions and their contribution to a counter memory of the civil war which challenged official 'forgetting'. Peadar O'Donnell, Francis Carty and Patrick Mulloy all created fictional records of historical and personal traumas in order to publicly acknowledge these events and prevent their erasure from the historical memory. Their writings testify to the generative impulse at the heart of traumatic experience, and demonstrate the collective impulse underlining testimony as all three hoped their stories were received by confirming audiences. Their accounts of trauma are all highly political; the narrative models they adopt reflect their own allegiances and also the interests of their intended audiences who could validate their accounts.

Their writings do not promote a straightforward cause-effect relationship between testifying and healing. Nevertheless, their testimonies participated in a wider cultural debate of the need to 'heal the war wounds' that bears evidence to the international opening up of ideas of psychoanalysis and psychic legacies of war.<sup>371</sup> Their texts all engage with questions of

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<sup>368</sup> P. D. K., [Review of *Mutiny without Malice*], *An Cosantóir*, Vol. 35, No. 8, August 1975.

<sup>369</sup> Brendan Behan, 'Advice from an Emigrant', *Irish Press*, 23 July 1955, p. 6.

<sup>370</sup> Patrick Mulloy, *Andy Tinpockets* New Treasury Library Series (Thames Publishing Co, 1950).

<sup>371</sup> Fianna Fáil ran on an election campaign of 'let us heal the wounds of war' in 1927. *Irish Independent*, 7 September 1927.

mental illness and its problematic engagement with ideas of heroic masculinity. Moreover, their various attempts to narratively revisit their civil war experience point to the 'imperative to tell and be heard' and suggest that the narrativisation of these traumas at least provided some cathartic compensation, however temporary. Although Carty's novel presents some sense of closure as the difficult revolutionary period is condemned to the past with Paul's visit to Rosaleen, the conclusion of Mulloy's novel underscores the rift between the combatant and civil society. Meanwhile, O'Donnell's prison diary participates in a longstanding model of republican remembrance in which trauma stories are no more than 'chapters' in an unending cycle of suffering building towards a brighter future.

The testimonies of O'Donnell, Carty and Mulloy largely endorse a sturdy masculine conception of wartime trauma. The fact that *Jackets Green* was deemed 'unpleasant' for, and even harmful to, the female jurists demonstrates the widespread exclusion of women from the wartime narrative of trauma, expressed here through the language of safeguarding. Even though Desmond Ryan was supportive of gender equality, his own writings include stereotypical one-dimensional representations of female revolutionaries, as characteristic of much writing of the revolution. Indeed, Ryan's civil war is signalled by the presence of 'rogues, looters, wasters and *hysterical women wrapping petty crimes and private griefs in the tricolour, too soon dyed red in the blood of the brothers of yesterday*' (my emphasis).<sup>372</sup> His selection of three male-authored texts to illustrate the 'spiritual wounds' of civil war points to the widespread gendering of war as a male domain. The following chapter will thus consider a number of female-authored texts that could equally have been selected for their evocation of the 'spiritual wounds' of civil war.

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<sup>372</sup> Ryan, *The Invisible Army*, p. 224.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FROM REST TO WRITING CURES: TESTIFYING TO WOMEN'S PAIN

Before its banning in Ireland, Patrick Mulloy's *Jackets Green* appeared in the *Irish Times* bestseller list alongside yet another autobiographical revolutionary novel: Kenneth Sarr's *Somewhere to the Sea* (1936). Sarr presents a 'first-hand' picture of the author's role as a lawyer in the underground Sinn Féin courts in the lead up to the treaty.<sup>1</sup> Its popularity, particularly in Dublin, further indicates the public's inability to 'stop reading' about the revolution.<sup>2</sup> Among the readership was prolific playwright and astute critic Mary Manning (1906–99) who had recently relocated to Boston. For Manning, Sarr's testimony was the first of many revolutionary novels that 'realized the existence of a great solid mass of quiet people who went on living and eating and laughing and sleeping or trying to sleep, during those years'.<sup>3</sup> Sarr's refreshing insights into the experience of ordinary citizens prompted Manning to present an autobiographical sketch of the rather mundane nuisance that the Battle of the Four Courts caused the bathers of Blackrock:

I remember as a child bathing at Seapoint, where all the nice little suburban children bathed, swimming out beyond the rocks, turning suddenly to look towards Dublin, and seeing the city more or less in flames. I felt very little surprise, only the mildest stirring of excitement, for it was the year Nineteen Twenty-two. The Irish Civil War was in full progress and for the second time in six years O'Connell Street was on fire. I could never feel much surprise again, having been brought up in troubled times and since my seventh year having been conscious of little else but wars and rumors of war. And then I heard our nurse screaming at us from the shore to come in outer that or no jam for tea. Her remarks were punctuated by distant gunfire, but her concern I learnt on reaching the shore was not inspired by sounds of warfare but rather that we might stay in too long and get cramps! And sure enough all the other nannies and governesses and mammas did not seem to be unduly alarmed but went on knitting and gossiping and keeping their eyes on their charges.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. J. M, 'A Fine First Novel', *Irish Press*, 3 March 1936, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Sarr's novel was the bestseller in Hodges Figgis, Fred Hanna and Sign of the Three Candles, while Mulloy's novel topped the sales in W. J. Humphries and Easons & Son. 'What Dublin is Reading', *The Irish Times*, 29 February 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Manning, 'Backdrop for a Troubled Stage (Review): *Somewhere to the Sea*, by Kenneth Reddin', *The Saturday Review*, 5 September 1936, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

Manning's criticism of the many accounts of the revolution that only deal with 'those taking an active part in it' highlights the gendered silences in the dominant commemorative culture of the revolution which was predicated on 'histories of heroic and unblemished freedom fighters'.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the testimonies discussed in Chapter Two in which the female protagonists are often reduced to symbolic importance,<sup>6</sup> the female characters in *Somewhere to the Sea* – Miriam Joyce and artist Estella Marlay – are complex, relatable characters, capable of their own successes and mistakes. Sarr too highlights how armed action is not divorced from seemingly private gendered traumas. In one instance, the shock of a raid on her home causes Muriel MacDermott to go into labour prematurely; this, although certainly dramatic, resonates with a number of contemporary accounts.<sup>7</sup>

Manning's review highlights the extent to which these revolutionary testimonies were consumed by both male and female readerships and that readers assimilated the testimonies of others through the lens of their own experience. It also underscores the precarious position in which female readers and reviewers of masculinised revolutionary account found themselves. As illustrated in Chapter Two, reviewers often saw their task as one of verifying, or challenging, the 'authenticity' of the author's story. As Kalí Tal contends in her consideration of Vietnam trauma literature, female reviewers could 'choose to work within the frameworks generated by [male] writers and the male reviewing establishment', although they would always be 'excluded from the club'.<sup>8</sup> Manning, however, rather than yielding to the 'masculinisation of the female reader', purposely exploited her review of Sarr's novel to bear witness on behalf of the ordinary citizens of Dublin suburbia and to critique the now-established hero narrative of revolution. She extended this criticism of the hegemonic masculine revolutionary narrative and social forgetting of women's experience two years later in her comic novel *Mount Venus* (1938), which was published in Boston, but never printed in Ireland or Britain due to libel fears.<sup>9</sup> The matriarch, Caroline d'Acosta (referred to as 'the

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Hopkinson, 'Introduction', in Frank Henderson, *Frank Henderson's Easter Rising: Recollections of a Dublin Volunteer* (Cork University Press, 1998), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> An exception is the character of Nuala Godfrey Dhu in *The Knife*. As Ó Drisceoil observes, O'Donnell's female characters are 'at least as active as men, and often more so'. Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Cork University Press, 2001), p. 129.

<sup>7</sup> An example is the case of Elizabeth MacCurtain, who prematurely gave birth to stillborn twins after witnessing her husband, Lord Mayor of Cork city, Tomás MacCurtain, being shot by Crown forces in his bedroom. See Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, 'Fighting their fathers' fight: the post-revolutionary generation in independent Ireland', in Senia Pašeta (ed.), *Uncertain Futures: Essays about the Irish Past for Roy Foster* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 151.

<sup>8</sup> Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> See Leo Keohane, *Captain Jack White: Imperialism, Anarchism and the Irish Citizen Army* (Merrion Press, 2014).

Doña’) is purportedly based on Maude Gonne McBride and is imprisoned over eight times for her revolutionary activities. Yet concealed behind the satire, Manning also addresses taboo aspects often omitted from the grand narrative; there is a suggestion that the Doña had been part of a cohabiting couple before getting married, her brother is an officer in the British army, and the often-overlooked destruction of the Spanish influenza is also acknowledged.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter considers testimonies of the civil war by female revolutionaries, which are conspicuously absent from Desmond Ryan’s selection of testimonies of the ‘spiritual wounds’ of the civil war. The treatment of women’s experience in a chapter following men’s testimonies is not intended to reify a gender hierarchy by contrasting women’s testimonies to a suggested male norm. Rather, this chapter will illustrate how male and female authors experienced many of the same challenges in attempting to satisfy the competing compulsions to both divulge and conceal at the heart of the posttraumatic autobiographical project. Nevertheless, women’s testimonies are further complicated by inherently gendered understandings of trauma. While men gave in to effeminate hysteria-like symptoms ‘only under the pressure of jarring physical experience’ such as railway accidents or warfare, women’s bodies were naturalised as ‘pathological and symptomatic’.<sup>11</sup> The idea that so many of women’s ordinary experiences were traumatic – from arranged marriage, to pregnancy, to childbirth – paradoxically rendered their lives not traumatic at all. As typical of post-conflict commemoration internationally, women’s suffering was often exploited in post-civil war remembrance for symbolic significance, while the individual heterogeneous experience of active women was increasingly side-lined.<sup>12</sup> Even the gender-exclusive motifs employed to denote internecine conflict – such as brother against brother, father against son; guerre fratricide; Bruderkrieg; cogadh na mbráthar – visibly erase women from the civil war narrative.

Women’s testimonies of female trauma thus entail a double challenge. In addition to engaging with the complex task of unburdening personal, private suffering through the public act of testimony, women’s self-representations of trauma are also tasked with renegotiating the wider objectification, symbolisation, and even commercialisation, of women’s pain. The wounded bodies of women often served as a conduit for men’s trauma given the taboo

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Manning, *Mount Venus* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938); Clair Wills, *Dublin 1916: The Siege of the GPO* (Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 236.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Lerner, and Micale, Mark S, ‘Trauma, Psychiatry, and History’, in *Traumatic Pasts: History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930*. Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 22; Lisa Dietrich, ‘PTSD: A New Trauma Paradigm’, in J. Roger Kurtz (eds), *Trauma and Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 88.

<sup>12</sup> James E. Young, ‘Regarding the Pain of Women: Questions of Gender and the Arts of Holocaust Memory’, *PMLA* 124, no. 5, 2009, p. 1779.

surrounding men's mental afflictions within hypermasculine narratives of war (as illustrated in Chapter Two). In line with nationalist discourse, female revolutionaries could also boast that 'suffering comes always with a kind of joy'.<sup>13</sup> Women were routinely conceived of as passive, self-sacrificing victims who stoically accepted their lot. This is typified in the pervasive literary tropes of 'Mother Ireland', 'Dark Rosaleen' or 'Kathleen Ni Houlihan' through which Irish 'nation' and Irish 'woman' are conflated. In other cases, the actual suffering of female revolutionaries was trivialised and branded as indicative of the violent, innate madness of 'furies', 'die-hards' and 'neurotic girls'.

The purgative potential of narrative is generally associated with two main processes: firstly, the private construction of a 'coherent, listenable narrative of a traumatic experience', and secondly, the sharing of narrative through a public testimonial act.<sup>14</sup> Both stages pose particular challenges for female testifying-subjects. If bearing witness entails a 'crisis of representation' connected to the breach between the subjective experience of the traumatic event and its objective description, the articulation of women's traumatic experience is further complicated by the restraints on female self-expression. As Elaine Showalter argues, this problem is not tied to language itself, but rather that 'women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism and circumlocution'.<sup>15</sup> More challenging than the 'problem of representation', however, is the 'question of address'. The difficulties of 'sharing' women's testimonies and finding an attuned witnessing audience is clear from the extra challenges they experienced in publicising, publishing and transmitting their testimonies in a commemorative culture that privileged men's accounts of war.

This chapter will consider a number of civil war testimonial accounts by female revolutionaries that grapple with the complex relationship between trauma, gender and language. As in Chapter Two, it will consider testimonial accounts that swerve from conventional forms of life writing and exploit generic hybridity to address experiences of trauma. Women's trauma testimonies often link daily structural or 'insidious' traumas to wartime trauma and contradict singular 'event-based' conceptions often foregrounded in narratives of war. Furthermore, in presenting domestic spaces as battlefronts no less immune to wartime traumas than conventional frontlines, their testimonies trouble the idea, as in the 1980 definition of posttraumatic stress disorder, that traumatic stressors must be 'outside the

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<sup>13</sup> 'A New Phase of Free State Degeneration: Women Prisoners of War', *Éire*, 16 June 1923. Leeann Lane suggests that this article is from the pen of Dorothy Macardle.

<sup>14</sup> Meg Jensen, 'Testimony', in Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> Elaine Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 2 (1981), p. 193.

range of human experience'. The majority of the authors included in this chapter opposed the treaty – Garrett O'Driscoll, the pen name of Peggie Kelly (1902–1969), Annie M. P. Smithson (1873–1948), Dorothy Macardle (1889–1958), and Máirín Cregan (1891–1975). However, the perspective of pro-treaty female revolutionaries is also presented through the civil war short stories of Máiréad Ní Ghráda (1896–1971) which suggest that the question of gender could transcend treaty allegiances in the post-civil war period.

### Madness and Female Revolutionaries

Much of the rhetoric employed to condemn female revolutionaries was couched in the pseudo-medical language of madness and lunacy. While male republicans were 'diagnosed' with pathological conditions such as 'neuroses', 'megalomania', and 'hysteria' by their opponents, Gavin Foster observes that such invective was specifically targeted at female anti-treatyites.<sup>16</sup> Although women were divided on the Anglo-Irish treaty, the belief that many women stridently opposed the treaty was propagated by the vocal rejection of the settlement by all six female TDs and the vociferous anti-treaty stance of Cumann na mBan at a national level.<sup>17</sup> This 'difference of opinion along sex lines' was also promulgated by suffragette leader Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, who claimed that 'wives, daughters and sisters are in one camp (Republican) and their menfolk in the other (Free State)'.<sup>18</sup> Women on the anti-treaty side in particular were assigned riskier tasks as the republican movement was increasingly forced underground; they were often expected to travel longer distances to courier messages and supplies, drove military cars during the battle of the Four Courts and also became increasingly responsible for storing and carrying ammunition, as men in possession of arms could be summarily executed. Despite this, women's diverse roles are 'completely absent', 'reduced to footnotes' and 'utterly [neglected]' in some of the key studies of the civil war<sup>19</sup> — such as Michael Hopkinson's *Green Against Green*, which is still regarded as the most comprehensive

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<sup>16</sup> Gavin Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class, and Conflict* (Springer, 2015), p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> *The Irish Independent*, 12 January 1922, p. 5; see Jason K. Knirck, *Women of the Dáil: Gender, Republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty* (Irish Academic Press, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, 'Letters from Abroad: The Irish Electorate', *The Freeman*, 10 May 1922, p. 206.

<sup>19</sup> Louise Ryan, 'Splendidly Silent: Representing Irish Republican Women, 1919–1923', in Ann-Marie Gallagher, Cathy Lubelska and Louise Ryan (eds), *Re-Presenting the Past: Women and History* (Longman, 2001), p. 39.

history of the conflict.<sup>20</sup> Over 600 women were also interned between 1922 and 1924 for anything from a number of weeks to up to nearly two years.<sup>21</sup> During this time, they were subject to regular fears of being exposed to arbitrary acts of violence and night-time raids by drunken soldiers.<sup>22</sup> The internment of republican women was again justified through their reduction to ‘neurotic girls’, ‘diehard’, ‘hysterical women’ and ‘harpies, ill-suited for rational political discourse’.<sup>23</sup>

These highly gendered conceptions of trauma also affected the medical treatment female revolutionaries received for ‘exhausted nerves’ in the aftermath of the conflict. Siobhán Lankford travelled from Cork to Dublin to seek treatment from Dr. Robert Farnan, finding his ‘consulting rooms in Merrion Square were crowded’ with women ‘who had been straining every nerve to assist in the fight for freedom’.<sup>24</sup> Dr Farnan was a gynaecologist by trade, yet also treated patients for nervous conditions; this is illustrative of contemporary perceptions that ‘weak nerves’ were inherently connected to the female reproductive system. Lankford was prescribed ‘six weeks complete rest in the Mater Hospital’ followed by a period ‘living in Malahide and Sutton, and Dr. Farnan’s care for a whole year’.<sup>25</sup> This type of treatment is redolent of the highly disciplined and gender-specific ‘rest cure’ first developed by Philadelphian neurologist Silas Weir Mitchell in the 1860s and ’70s. Mitchell’s rest cure was devised primarily for well-to-do ladies and was based on the removal of the patient from her usual surroundings which sometimes, as in Lankford’s case, involved a retreat to the

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Gill and Macmillan, 2004). Kissane also notes that ‘the changed role of women did not find [its] way into history until recently’. Bill Kissane, ‘On the Shock of Civil War: Cultural Trauma and National Identity in Finland and Ireland’, *Nations and Nationalism* (1), 2020, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Collins Press, 2014), p. 227; Ann Matthews, *Dissidents: Irish Republican Women, 1923–1941* (Cork: Mercier, 2012), p. 257; Sinéad McCoole, *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years, 1900–1923* (Dublin: O’Brien, 2003), pp 244–265. It is important to note that these studies do not consider the internment of female revolutionaries north of the emerging border, including the women interned in Armagh Gaol.

<sup>22</sup> See Laura McAtackney, ‘Gender, Incarceration and Power Relations during the Irish Civil War (1922–1923)’, in Victoria Sanford, Katerina Stefatos, and Cecilia M. Salvi (eds), *Gender Violence in Peace and War: States of Complicity* (Rutgers University Press, 2016), pp 47–64.

<sup>23</sup> President William Cosgrove claimed in his 1923 New Year’s address that ‘neurotic girls are among the most active adherents to the Irregular cause’. The Bishop of Elphin’s Lenten Pastoral denounced members of Cumann na mBan as ‘half-crazed, hysterical women’, while the Free State Attorney General condemned female revolutionaries as ‘diehard women’ ‘whose ecstasies at their extremest can find no outlet so satisfying as destruction’. Perhaps the most oft-cited example is that of pro-treaty writer P. S. O’Hegarty whose 1924 account, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, dedicated a chapter to the vices of republican women; they were ‘harpies, ill-suited for rational political discourse’ who were responsible of making devils of men, through ‘her implacability, her bitterness, her hysteria’. See Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, pp 33–34; ‘Lenten Pastorals: Lawlessness Condemned’, *Offaly Independent*, 17 February 1923, p. 3; P. S. O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (University College Dublin Press, 1924), p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> Siobhán Lankford, *The Hope and the Sadness: Personal Recollections of Troubled Times in Ireland* (Tower Books, 1980) p. 250.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, p. 250.

countryside or to the seaside. In its most regimented form, the patient was expected to lie in bed for six weeks to two months and was not allowed to read, write, feed herself or contact anyone.

However, Dr Farnan adopted a different approach for male combatants. Indeed, he was known for his ability to ‘cure by merely speaking to the men’.<sup>26</sup> Whereas it is suggested that men’s treatment endorsed some sort of ‘talk therapy’ and aimed facilitating their swift re-entry into combat or into the workforce, women’s treatment often consisted of lengthy ‘rest cure’ therapies that precluded them from public life and thus supported their refeminisation and domestication.<sup>27</sup>

### From Rest to Writing Cures?

The curtailment of women’s self-expression in medical treatments is reflected in the suppression of the voices of female revolutionaries during the revolution and its aftermath. The resistance to the circulation of women’s writings was arguably a feature of the entire conflict between 1916 and 1923; documents were often confiscated during raids on domestic homes given the vital roles of female couriers and propagandists.<sup>28</sup> In the autumn of 1921, for example, Emily Ussher’s novel *The Trail of the Black & Tans* (published under the pseudonym ‘The Hurler on the Ditch’) was purportedly removed from bookshop windows by the Cork RIC due to its descriptions of atrocities carried out by the Black and Tans.<sup>29</sup> Kathleen Goodfellow’s collection of short stories, *Three Tales of the Times* (1921) also graphically depicted the violence of the Black and Tans, including the impact on children of witnessing violence.<sup>30</sup>

However, when Mrs. Ussher wrote a follow-up novel, it was deemed ‘too sad and depressing’ in the context of the ‘agreement between Free Stater and Republican’.<sup>31</sup> While

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<sup>26</sup> Colonel Eamon Broy, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 1285, 17 November 1955, p. 86.

<sup>27</sup> I have further explored this phenomenon in the following article: Siobhra Aiken, ‘“The Women Who Had Been Straining Every Nerve”: Gender-Specific Medical Management of Trauma in the Irish Revolution (1916–1923)’, in Melania Terrazas Gallego (ed.), *Trauma and Identity in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Peter Lang, 2020), pp 133–158.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Bonfire of Papers. Sequel to Search of Madame Mac Bride’s House’, *The Freeman’s Journal*, 13 November 1922, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> 15 November 1921, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager’s Correspondence, 1048/1/68. See also Joanna Wydenbach, ‘Emily Ussher and The Trail of the Black & Tans’, *Revue LISA/LISA e-Journal. Littératures, Histoire Des Idées, Images, Sociétés Du Monde Anglophone – Literature, History of Ideas, Images and Societies of the English-Speaking World*, January 2000, pp 22–38.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Scot, *Three Tales of the Times* (Talbot Press, Ltd., 1921).

<sup>31</sup> 29 May 1922, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager’s Correspondence, 1048/1/72.

many women chronicled their experiences with a sense, as Senia Pařeta writes, that their revolutionary experiences ‘were worth remembering’,<sup>32</sup> securing a publisher in the post-independence period became particularly difficult for women. Sheehy Skeffington found her ‘Dublin Memories’ rejected by Talbot Press in 1934, as although ‘chatty and enjoyable’, its ‘literary value’ was ‘slender’.<sup>33</sup> Margaret Buckley’s *The Jangle of the Keys* (1938) is the only published female-authored civil war jail memoir.<sup>34</sup> Many other female revolutionaries’ memoirs were simply never published, such as Eithne Coyle’s<sup>35</sup>, Sighle Humphreys’<sup>36</sup> and Lily O’Brennan’s accounts, while Máire Comerford’s overlooked memoir was serialised in its Irish translation in *Agus* magazine from 1981 to 1990.

Etymologically the term ‘testimony’ – connected to the Latin ‘testes’ – points to the longstanding gendering of the ‘witness’ as male. As Leigh Gilmore illustrates, women are routinely conceived of as ‘untrustworthy witnesses’ in the public sphere in such a way that ‘women’s witness is discredited’.<sup>37</sup> This tendency to undermine and mistrust women’s testimonies is clear from scholarly emphasis on the ‘the lives – and lies’ in Maud Gonne’s writings, most notably her 1938 autobiography *Servant of the Queen*.<sup>38</sup> Women’s voices too were elided from major commemorative projects, such as the series of regional accounts published in the 1940s under the title *Fighting Story 1916–21: Told by the Men who Made it*, and Ernie O’Malley’s interview collection, appropriately published under the title *The Men Will Talk to Me*.<sup>39</sup> As scholarship based on more recently released files increasingly demonstrates, women’s names and activities are often conspicuously absent, or even consciously expunged, from male veterans’ accounts.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Senia Pařeta, *Irish Nationalist Women, 1900–1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> 8 February 1934, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager’s Correspondence, 1048/1/132.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret Buckley, *The Jangle of the Keys* (J. Duffy & Company limited, 1938).

<sup>35</sup> Eithne Coyle O’Donnell, ‘Memoir c.1940’, UCDA P61/2.

<sup>36</sup> Sighle Humphreys, ‘Account of Her First Years in Prison 1922–23’. UCDA P106/978 (1). Transcription available at: <https://humphrysfamilytree.com/Humphrys/sighle.papers.html> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Leigh Gilmore, *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say About Their Lives* (Columbia University Press, 2017), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Conrad Balliett, ‘The lives – and lies – of Maud Gonne’, *Éire–Ireland*, vol. 13, no. 3 (fall 1979). Margaret Ward suggests that Adrien Frazier perpetuates this emphasis on the mendacity of Gonne’s life writing in his biography, *The Adulterous Muse*. See Ward, ‘Review of Adrian Frazier, *The Adulterous Muse*, by Dr Margaret Ward’, *Women’s History Association of Ireland* (blog), 7 March 2017, <https://womenshistoryassociation.com/book-reviews/review-of-adrian-frazier-the-adulterous-muse-by-dr-margaret-ward/>.

<sup>39</sup> *Rebel Cork’s Fighting Story, 1916–1921* (Kerryman, 1947); *Kerry’s Fighting Story, 1916–21* (Kerryman, 1947); *Dublin’s Fighting Story, 1913–1921* (Kerryman, 1948); *Limerick’s Fighting Story, 1916–21* (Kerryman, 1948). O’Malley’s interviews were gathered between the late 1930s and 1950s.

<sup>40</sup> Síobhra Aiken et al. (eds), *The Men Will Talk to Me: Ernie O’Malley’s Interviews with the Northern Divisions* (Merrion Press, 2018), p. 17; See Ailbhe Rogers, ‘Cumann na mBan in Co. Louth, 1914–1921’, in Donal Hall and Maguire Martin (eds), *County Louth and the Irish Revolution: 1912–1923* (Irish Academic Press, 2017).

These hurdles in terms of production, publication, and being believed, may explain the reluctance of many female revolutionaries to place themselves at the centre of their own narratives. Despite the wealth of testimonies by female revolutionaries – in the form of diaries, witness statements, interviews and a handful of published autobiographies – Lucy McDiarmid contends that women’s accounts of the 1916 Rising are characterised by ‘exteriority’ as they are primarily interested in constructing ‘themselves as part of a collective’.<sup>41</sup> For female revolutionaries, writing about the self could prove, as Karen Steele outlines, ‘liberating but also alienating’.<sup>42</sup> Síghle Humphreys, in her almost forgotten, unpublished account of imprisonment, humorously apologises for her use of first-person narration: ‘I’m afraid it will be more an account about myself than the women prisoners, all I hope is that I wont [sic] be as bad as Benjamin Franklin’.<sup>43</sup> The ambiguities surrounding women’s agency as writers is also played out in co-authored narratives, such as those of the Power and Cooney sisters.<sup>44</sup> Both Eithne Coyle and Dorothy Macardle wrote accounts of their relationship with Maude Gonne McBride as a means to reveal information about their own lives.<sup>45</sup> Women also often mediated the transmission of men’s accounts: Moya Llewelyn Davies most probably had a hand in Charles Dalton’s and Batt O’Connor’s memoirs published by her nephew, Peter Davis, in 1929. However, this work was largely unaccredited, and even, as in the case of Kitty O’Doherty who apparently was the ghost-writer of Dan Breen’s *My Fight For Irish Freedom* (1924), unremunerated.<sup>46</sup> Other women, such as Lily MacManus, inserted quotes from leading male figures into their autobiographies as a vehicle to reveal their own opinions.<sup>47</sup>

Given that political women could only write about the self ‘in the most restricted or disguised of terms’,<sup>48</sup> the espousal of generic hybridity, or the blending of fiction and personal

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<sup>41</sup> Lucy McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916* (Royal Irish Academy, 2015), p. 38, p. 133.

<sup>42</sup> Karen Steele, ‘When Female Activists Say ‘I’: The Veiled Rebel and Counterhistories of Irish Independence’, in Gillian McIntosh and Diane Urquhart (eds), *Irish Women at War: The Twentieth Century* (Irish Academic Press, 2010), p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Síghle Humphreys, ‘Account of Her First Years In Prison 1922–23’. UCDA P106/978 (1). Transcription available at: <https://humphrysfamilytree.com/Humphrys/sighle.papers.html> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>44</sup> De Paor, Mairéad and Siobhán, ‘Blaze Away With Your Gun’, *The Kerryman*, 21 December 1968, p. 28, December 1968, 3 January 1969. See the joint witness statement of the Cooney sisters, Mrs Denis O’Brien and Mrs. Lily Curran, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 805, 17 February 1953.

<sup>45</sup> See Coyle’s unpublished memoir, UCDA P61/2. Nadia Claire Smith, ‘From Dundalk to Dublin: Dorothy Macardle’s Narrative Journey on Radio Éireann’, *The Irish Review*, no. 42 (2010), p. 31.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Kevin O’Doherty, *My Parents and Other Rebels: A Personal Memoir* (Errigal Press, 1999), p. 102. Margaret O’Callaghan, ‘Women and politics in independent Ireland, 1921–68’, in Angela Bourke et al. (eds), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing V: Irish Women’s Writing and Traditions* (NYU Press, 2002), p. 123.

<sup>47</sup> Lily MacManus, *White Light and Flame: Memories of the Irish Literary Revival and the Anglo-Irish War* (Talbot Press: Dublin, 1929).

<sup>48</sup> Margaret O’Callaghan, ‘Women’s Political Autobiography in Independent Ireland’, in Liam Harte (ed.), *A History of Irish Autobiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 135.

experience, is of particular pertinence for female authors. As Max Saunders argues, ‘when most biography and formal autobiography narrated the lives of men’, *fin de siècle* ‘fiction paradoxically becomes an arena for granting female experience an equivalent reality in the public sphere’.<sup>49</sup> Cumann na mBan founder Alice Cashel, for example, wrote a young adult novel called *The Leaca Bána*. Despite the romantic nationalism at the surface, the novel highlights Cashel’s own feminism: the young protagonist, Nora, is described as the individual who ‘will really save Ireland’ ahead of her male school companions.<sup>50</sup> Equally, Lily O’Brennan employed covert narrative strategies to highlight women’s roles in the conflict: her unpublished children’s novel, ‘Leading a Dog’s Life in Ireland’, chronicles the period 1916–1921 through the eyes of a dog.<sup>51</sup> Her earlier novel *The Call to Arms: A Tale of the Land League Days*, published in 1929 under the pen name Esther Graham to little critical acclaim, also shares the explicit aim of highlighting the ‘priceless services of the heroes and the heroines of the Land War, for the women were in it, too’.<sup>52</sup> This flight to the past— particularly to the context of the 1798 Rebellion – emerges as yet another popular enabling strategy to address the experience of female revolutionaries.<sup>53</sup>

### **Garrett O’Driscoll: Talking To Your Childhood ‘With Pen Dipped, Not in Ink, But in Tears’**

The next section of this chapter will consider how fiction provided an opportunity for female authors to voice and exorcise wartime experience and its concomitant trauma. Particular attention will be afforded to the following testimonial fiction: Garrett O’Driscoll’s novel, *Noreen* (1929), Annie M. P. Smithson’s romance novel *The Marriage of Nurse Harding* (1935), the gothic short stories of Dorothy Macardle and Máiréad Ní Ghráda, *Earth-bound* (1924) and *An Bheirt Dearbhráthar agus Scéalta Eile* (1938), and Máirín Cregan’s autobiographical play *Hunger–strike: A Play in Two Acts* (1932). Steele contends that female

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<sup>49</sup> Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Alice M. Cashel, *The Lights of Leaca Bán: A Story of Recent Times in Ireland* (Browne and Nolan, 1935).

<sup>51</sup> ‘Republican women went reluctantly to bed at night, and could hardly sleep listening for the clamorous [sic] knock that meant the arrest of those they sheltered, or the removal of the sinews of war [...]’. Lily M. O’Brennan, ‘Annotated Typescript Draft of Novel “Leading a Dog’s Life in Ireland”, National Library of Ireland, MSS. 15,602–15,603.

<sup>52</sup> Esther Graham, *The Call to Arms ; a Tale of the Land League Days*. (Browne and Nolan, 1929).

<sup>53</sup> See Rosamond Jacob, *The Rebel’s Wife* (Kerryman, 1957).

revolutionaries' life stories 'rarely produced personal or political transformations for the female subject'.<sup>54</sup> In light of such supposed limitations on standard autobiography, this chapter will explore the personal cathartic aims behind female-authored fictional projects of 'scriptotherapy'.<sup>55</sup>

Garrett O'Driscoll's first, and possibly only, published poem 'The Plain People' was printed just days before Éamon de Valera's call to the 'Legion of the Rearguard' to drop arms in May 1923 and end the civil war. The speaker forcefully decries 'the plain people' who have not remained firm in their principles and have repudiated the values which they so cherished 'yesterday':

**The Plain People**

We have builded on the day,  
    Of the clay,  
We have striven and achieved  
We have listened and believed  
And ye left us without warning  
    On the way,  
With the Golden City sighted,  
With the wrongs of years unrighted,  
At the breaking of the morning  
    of the Day.

We have buried in the clay  
    Of the clay,  
Youth and gladness, love and laughter,  
Sent to face the great Hereafter  
At your bidding, all we cherished  
    Yesterday –  
For a dream, was it? – a blunder?  
(Oh, the severings asunder  
When they smiled and prayed and perished,  
    Who shall say?)

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<sup>54</sup> Karen Steele, 'Revolutionary Lives in the Rearview Mirror: Memoir and Autobiography', in Marjorie Elizabeth Howes (ed.), *Irish Literature in Transition, 1880–1940: Volume 4* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 115.

<sup>55</sup> Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* (St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. xii.

We have mingled with the clay,  
Of the clay,  
Tears of women, blood of men;  
We have given– given again  
Home and kindred, father, brother  
For (you say)  
A poor fairy thing? – a gleam? –  
A now half-forgotten dream?  
(Ah, ye called it other, other  
Yesterday).<sup>56</sup>

Evoking the collective voice, the speaker conjures up a sense of betrayal felt by the republican side as ‘ye left us without warning, On the way’. Yet while the collective voice is tied to the political, there is also a personal undertone: the memories of those who ‘smiled and prayed and perished’ brings a familiar dimension and suggests an intimate relationship between the speaker and the civil war dead.

The poem ‘The Plain People’ could easily be forgotten among the many such poems which appeared in newspapers and propaganda sheets throughout the civil war. Yet Garrett O’Driscoll carved out a literary reputation the following year for the Aonach Tailteann prize-winning novel *Noreen*. The strong, assertive poetic voice hiding behind a male penname in fact belonged to Cumann na mBan revolutionary Margaret ‘Peggie’ Kelly.<sup>57</sup> Peggie and her sister Winifred spent much of their youth in St. Mary Dominican convent in Dún Laoghaire after the death of their mother Marion Kelly (née Sheils) in October 1909.<sup>58</sup> From 1919, however, they became lodgers at 15 Marino Crescent, Clontarf, which was the Boland family home and ‘a favourite resort of gunman and repository of guns’.<sup>59</sup> By day, the sisters typed documents, transported arms and ran despatches, while at night they worked as couriers.<sup>60</sup> In early 1921, the Kelly sisters were discovered burning documents in an open fire and were visited by

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<sup>56</sup> *Offaly Independent*, 19 May 1923, p. 8; *Westmeath Independent*, 19 May 1923, p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Listed as ‘Maighréad Kelly’ in the membership rolls of the Ardchraobh of Cumann na mBan, Irish Military Archives, Cumann na mBan Nominal Rolls, CMB/126.

<sup>58</sup> As listed in 1911 census.

<sup>59</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland’s Irish Revolution* (Cork University Press, 2004), p. 221.

<sup>60</sup> Jody Allen Randolph, ‘If no one wanted to remember’: Margaret Kelly and the Lost Battalion’, in Tina O’Toole, Gillian McIntosh, and Muireann Ó’Cinnéide (eds), *Women Writing War: Ireland 1880–1922* (University College Dublin Press, 2016), p. 135.

detectives from Dublin Castle. Fearing arrest, they fled to Glasgow on a mail boat.<sup>61</sup> After their father died at sea in March 1922, they returned to Ireland and once again took up residency in Marino Crescent. They remained in Clontarf during the civil war; a number of their acquaintances lost their lives in the conflict, including Harry Boland who was shot by a former companion in the Free State army on 2 August 1922.

Kelly was decidedly reticent about her revolutionary exploits and left no written record of her activities. Her life and works have only recently been recuperated in an article by Jody Allen Randolph, who stumbled across Kelly by chance when writing her biography of Kelly's acclaimed niece, Eavan Boland.<sup>62</sup> Although Kelly passed on little more than 'mere fragments' of her experience, Garrett O'Driscoll documented the revolutionary period in a number of short stories published between 1922 and 1925, and most notably in her 1924 novel *Noreen* published by London publisher, George Roberts, in 1929.<sup>63</sup> In her writings, the political upheaval becomes a site where the 'insidious trauma' of patriarchal oppression, familial mourning, and national politics converge. In that sense, O'Driscoll's novel challenges popular 'punctualist' conceptions of trauma which often connect trauma to a singular causation which is 'outside the range of normal experience'. The traumas hinted at in *Noreen*, are, in Greg Forter's words 'so chronic and cumulative, so woven into the fabric of our societies, that they cannot count as shocks'.<sup>64</sup> O'Driscoll's interest in the psychological legacies of war is clear from her later concerns for the many 'able-bodied' but 'not quite able-minded' ex-IRA men who found themselves desolate as they could not qualify for a wound pension.<sup>65</sup> Her writings too underscore the oppressive medicalisation of women's emotional health and also connect women's subjugation to their linguistic behaviour, as reflected in her recourse to a male pseudonym.

### A Project Of Scriptotherapy?

*Noreen* can be read as an exercise in 'scriptotherapy'. The idea of narrative therapy is inscribed into the novel itself. *Noreen*'s brother, Con, hides his 'old copy-book of effusions' in

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid*, p. 135.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid*, pp 133–149.

<sup>63</sup> Garrett O'Driscoll, 'The Blind Man: A Story', *Green and Gold: A Magazine of Fiction, Etc.* V, no. 20 (November 1925), pp 133–40. Garrett O'Driscoll, 'The June Babies: A Story', *Green and Gold: A Magazine of Fiction, Etc.* IV, no. 16 (November 1924), pp 223–34. Garrett O'Driscoll, 'The Lacklander: A Story', *Green and Gold: A Magazine of Fiction, Etc.* V, no. 18 (1925), pp 1–11.

<sup>64</sup> Greg Forter, 'Freud, Faulkner, Caruth: Trauma and the Politics of Literary Form', *Narrative* 15, no. 3 (2007), pp 259–60.

<sup>65</sup> Garrett O'Driscoll, 'Those of the Lost Battalion', *The Irish Press*, 2 July 1934.

the bottom of a press in which he ‘laid bare’ ‘so much of his inner heart’.<sup>66</sup> Writing provides a means of coping as he is engaged in a constant struggle against his father. At night, in particular, words come to him ‘easily’ and bring ‘a gleam [...] in his dark eyes...’<sup>67</sup> It is not hard to imagine that Con’s practice may be reflective of the author’s own writing method given the circumstances in which the novel was produced. As Randolph elucidates:

Peggy Kelly started writing this novel during the War of Independence when she and others worked ‘tirelessly for the lads’, taking the reins of revolution from an older generation [...] She saw many of them die for a new Ireland shaped by their own youthful hopes. She worked on the novel while on the run in Glasgow, with the deaths of the Civil War, including Harry Boland and Liam Mellows, before her. She finished her novel after the Civil War drew to a close in April 1923 while her future husband was interned by Free State forces. Shadowing her life in words, her fiction mines both personal and national grief, and the poignant rooms where one blurred into the other.<sup>68</sup>

The novel, which might be described as a female anti-bildungsroman, traces the development of the eponymous protagonist, Noreen, from her birth to the drama of the Easter Rising. Thwarting the upward mobility narrative often associated with the bildungsroman, the novel’s conclusion is marked by tragedy. Death looms large throughout. In poetic lines that echo the ‘The Plain People’, Noreen finds ‘Death around her, and about her, and before her and behind her. What is Death? White stones above white bones in the silent clay? Or a great door wherethrough there passes, once, for always, the soul that is not clay?’<sup>69</sup>

Like Carty’s novel which was decorated with an image of Éamon de Valera, O’Driscoll established her republican allegiances in *Noreen* by dedicating the first section of the book to ‘The Chief’. Even though the Rising only features in the final nine pages of the 300-page novel, O’Driscoll’s inscription intertwines the routines of childhood with the wider political struggle. This first section follows the Donegan family, living in rural Ballygrath, from the birth of the youngest and only daughter – Nora Kathleen – to the tragic death of the eldest of the four siblings, Con, from consumption. It was this treatment of rural Irish family life that particularly impressed critics, including Edward Compton Mackenzie, who heralded *Noreen* as ‘one of the

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<sup>66</sup> Garrett O’Driscoll, *Noreen* (London : George Roberts 1929), p. 44

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>68</sup> Randolph, ‘If no one wanted to remember’, p. 143.

<sup>69</sup> O’Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 277.

most tender pictures of childhood I have ever seen'.<sup>70</sup>

However, unlike the many war books that present idyllic, innocent pictures of childhood as a contrast to the later turmoil, O'Driscoll's sketches of childhood are beset by impending sadness and offer little nostalgic respite from the present. Evoking the poetry of Alice Meynell, childhood is recalled 'with pen dipped, not in ink, but in tears'.<sup>71</sup> The intimate childhood friendship which develops between Michael Donegan and Mac is disturbed by the voice of the omniscient narrator who cries back through the prism of foresight to warn them of the split that would come to divide them: 'And oh, Michael, Michael agradh! Isn't it many a thought you'll give Mulligan's field in the turbulent years to come?'<sup>72</sup>

The themes of violence and death are a feature of early childhood expressed through the mistreatment of Noreen's beloved cat, Lickylips. Despite Noreen's protests, her father decrees that Lickylips' litter of kittens be 'drowned', causing the cat to wail 'forlornly around the house'.<sup>73</sup> This emphasis on the welfare of animals, as observed in Mulloy's children's novel *Andy Tinpockets*, could be employed as a strategy to denounce political violence; O'Driscoll's later writings illustrate how antivivisection campaigns were often married with the cause of women's rights.<sup>74</sup> The cat's death introduces Noreen to the realities of death and unearths incredibly strong emotions in the young protagonist: 'She did not want to be alive. She wanted to die.'<sup>75</sup>

Lickylip's death anticipates the death of Noreen's older brother, Con. Con rebels constantly against his patriarchal environment and is routinely beaten by his father, as the children's mother looks on 'powerless'.<sup>76</sup> An 'idealist' and a 'dreamer', his mother worries that he hardly eats, doesn't sleep, and wonders 'is he very fond of himself?'<sup>77</sup> His rebelliousness is further illustrated through his rejection of the Catholic church, upsetting both his family and the local priest. His rejection of God, moreover, is connected to his sense of the injustices of the world, as he finds it impossible to reconcile himself with 'the sadness of things .... *the*

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<sup>70</sup> 'Prize-Winning Novel by Local Author: *Noreen* by Garrett O'Driscoll', *Nenagh Guardian*, 15 March 1930, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> This is most certainly a reference to Alice Meynell's poem 'The Poet to his Childhood'. British poet Meynell (1847-1922) was highly celebrated at the turn of the century and her work appeared in Irish suffrage journal, *The Irish Citizen*. Like O'Driscoll, her works exploited national conflict to explore themes of 'sexual politics and generational dynamics of patriarchy'. See Sharon Smulders, 'Feminism, Pacifism and the Ethics of War: The Politics and Poetics of Alice Meynell's War Verse', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920* 36, no. 2 (1993), p. 159.

<sup>72</sup> O'Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 94.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid*, p. 97.

<sup>74</sup> See also Garrett O'Driscoll, 'Are the Irish Cruel to Animals?', *Irish Press*, 26 January 1934, p 6.

<sup>75</sup> O'Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 151.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*, p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid*, p. 54.

*sadness of things*.... It's like a cold river always flowing over me, things and people struggling with evil, and going down – getting swamped, getting damned...'<sup>78</sup> Con's illness is thus mental as much as physical; his preference for writing over eating takes a toll on his body.<sup>79</sup> After a brief period studying medicine in Dublin, he writes to his mother that he has contracted consumption and is 'coming home for good'.<sup>80</sup> He dies five months after his return to Ballygrath, 'swamped by the sadness of things'.<sup>81</sup> However, the suffering in *Noreen* is always collective and contagious, as much as individual. As the narrator comments, 'And that is life. I suffer. You suffer. I suffer because you suffer, and you because I suffer. So we bear a burden other than the burden of the day'.<sup>82</sup>

### The Gendered Subtext of Trauma and Politics

The second section of *Noreen* is set in Dublin after an elapse of twelve years with the First World War and the approaching Rising as a backdrop. Noreen follows Con's legacy in resisting against her social environment. As is often the case in narratives of civil war, the military conflict becomes 'a metaphor for inner conflicts' which, as Margaret Higonnet argues, is frequently accompanied by an inversion of gender roles. In particular, civil war, or war on 'home' territory, 'becomes a metaphor for reversals in emotional and sexual relationships'.<sup>83</sup> While the Donegan brothers, Michael and Derry, join the Gaelic League, host debates on the national question and join the Volunteers, Noreen's revolution is tied to her status as woman. She finds her match in Lila Panther – a childhood friend from Scotland with whom she becomes reacquainted. The 'exquisite' and exotic Lila symbolises the social progress being made in early twentieth-century Ireland. Described as a 'tomboy', she smokes her brother's cigarettes, enjoys frequent trips to the theatre and shares a sympathy for the 'downtrodden' not quite appreciated by her English fiancé, Bernie.<sup>84</sup> Yet Lila's perceived free spirit is compromised by her engagement. Noreen cannot hold back her horror that Lila is to be married. Lila responds flippantly, 'Well I'm not engaged to be hanged, am I?'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*, p. 131.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*, p. 172.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid*, p. 174.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid*, p. 106.

<sup>83</sup> Margaret R. Higonnet, 'Civil Wars and Sexual Territories', in *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation*, in Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Munich, and Susan Merrill Squier (eds), *Arms and the Woman: War, Gender, and Literary Representation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), p. 95.

<sup>84</sup> O'Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 259; p. 235.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid*, p. 198.

The plainer Noreen – described in characteristically oxymoronic terms as being ‘not ugly, neither was she pretty’ – resists social norms more forcibly than Lila, although this is less discernible from outside appearances. Unlike Lila’s dramatic fashion, Noreen dresses sensibly, as her ‘father frowned on bare throats and transparent stockings’.<sup>86</sup> Her father comes to symbolise the patriarchy: she laments that he ‘thinks because I’m a girl I’ve no right to be in the world’, declares that she is ‘not his property’ nor ‘a piece of his furniture’, and insists that she does not ‘want to be *ladylike*’.<sup>87</sup> After a quarrel with her father, in which he criticises her deceased brother, Con, Noreen runs away from home, threatens to escape to America, and takes flight to Glasgow, to where Lila is staying.

This conflict in gender roles is connected to the political struggle through the prevalence of military metaphors: Noreen walks ‘like a warrior’, gives the poker ‘a warlike twirl’ and challenges her father ‘to a wordy battle’.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, O’Driscoll repeatedly subverts gender roles in her writings. Noreen insists her cat, Lickylips, is a boy, although ‘he’ bears a litter of kittens; Lila refers to the rescued orphan girl Estelle Amy as a ‘small boy’; Michael has a ‘light touch’ ‘like a woman’s’; and Lila – who holds herself ‘boyishly’ – exclaims that her fiancé, Bernie, is ‘the lady’ in the relationship and treats her in a ‘motherly’ way.<sup>89</sup> This undercutting of conventional notions of gender and sexuality is further evident in O’Driscoll’s ambiguous story ‘Mettle’ in which the teacher, Guifoyle, admits that he had been ‘crossed in love’ but never ‘loved a woman’.<sup>90</sup> Like Mulloy’s allusions to homosexual relations in the camp, O’Driscoll’s subtle questioning of the conventions of heterosexual love contrasts the rigid gender dichotomies which would become characteristic of the metanarrative of the revolution.

O’Driscoll’s writings too hint at the tendency to prescribe rest-based therapies to ‘nervous’ women who transgressed social boundaries in order to promote their domestication and refeminisation. Lila’s fiancé finds her to be ‘irritable and unstrung’ and arranges for her to take a month’s recuperation in Glasgow.<sup>91</sup> O’Driscoll’s first published short story, ‘The Flippant Young Man’<sup>92</sup> – considered by Randolph to contain ‘strong autobiographical elements’ – also points to the prescription of ‘rest’. The eccentric 21-year-old narrator, Mabel

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<sup>86</sup> *ibid*, p. 202.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid*, p. 231, p. 245.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid*, p. 230.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid*, p. 224.

<sup>90</sup> Garrett O’Driscoll, ‘Mettle: A Story’, *Green and Gold: A Magazine of Fiction, Etc.* V, no. 21 (December 1925), p. 265.

<sup>91</sup> O’Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 256.

<sup>92</sup> Garrett O’Driscoll, ‘A Flippant Young Man: A Story’, *Green and Gold: A Magazine of Fiction, Etc.* II, no. 8 (November 1922), pp 167–76.

Puck, had led an ‘unregenerate’ life in Dublin, but on becoming ‘very tired – very queer, and very, very tired’, she retreats to an isolated country cottage bought with her inheritance money. On doctor’s orders, she must eat eggs, and is catered for by the local women who drop her off dairy products and do her laundry. Yet Mabel’s removal from public life fails; she falls in love with an injured IRA man whom she discovers in her garden.<sup>93</sup>

If relief from trauma is achieved through abreaction, women’s access to language is also constantly problematised: Derry admonishes Noreen ‘paternally’ that ‘[I]ittle girls should be seen and not heard’, while Father Seagrave reminds her that ‘[I]ittle girls must never put out their tongues’ and ‘should not wink’.<sup>94</sup> When Noreen uses language unbecoming of a little girl (she exclaims that the kettle is ‘as hot as blazes’), she is sternly chastised.<sup>95</sup> Even in adult life, Noreen is censured for using ‘unladylike language’.<sup>96</sup>

### Evoking Trauma Through the Romance Mode

Like the employment of the love triangle in Carty’s and Mulloy’s novels, romantic conflict is a prime vehicle to convey trauma in *Noreen*. When Lila’s engagement with Bernie is broken off, she proposes to her true love, Derry Donegan. Yet romance is bittersweet. The narrator warns that ‘who would have the rose must have the thorn, and who taketh the Lily taketh the Shadow too’.<sup>97</sup> Love is also tainted by sorrow for Noreen. She finally admits to herself that she has fallen in love with Kenneth, Lila’s brother who is on leave due to injury from the British army. Despite her deep affection for Kenneth – unlike her sentiments for the third vertex on the love triangle, doctor and IRA volunteer Fergus O’Hara – Noreen sacrifices her happiness in order to appease her nationalistic brothers.<sup>98</sup> Yet this decision marks the end of her girlhood, as conveyed through an uncanny moment of self-division as she takes one final glimpse at her youthful self in the mirror:

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<sup>93</sup> The gendered subtext of medical trauma is addressed in a number of popular novels. This illustrates the need for the wider consideration of less conventional narratives, as advocated by Jason Crouthamel and Peter Leese, to ‘challenge hegemonic notions of trauma defined by political and medical authorities’. See Crouthamel and Leese, ‘Introduction’, in Crouthamel and Leese (eds), *Psychological Trauma and the Legacies of the First World War* (Springer, 2016), p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> O’Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 90, p. 98, p. 62.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

She stood awhile at the mirror before changing her clothes [...] Through half-shut eyes she saw herself as she had been when she had been, for the first and only time in her whole life, pretty: took a last, long look at the slim silk-clad ankles, the black-brown, waved, dishevelled hair, the bare arms. No one would ever think her pretty again – not even Kenn, so changed in this one night she was. She was no longer now a girl, but a woman, with her whole life under shadow...<sup>99</sup>

For Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega, the ‘formal affinity with the romance as a mode’ is often evoked ‘whenever realism fails to evoke extreme situations’.<sup>100</sup> This deflection from civil war trauma to romance emerges in a number of semi-autobiographical novels, such as Peadar Ó Dubhdha’s *Briain*. As Philip O’Leary underlines, the ‘shift in emphasis from a novel dealing with political and military issues to a love story coincides with the approach of the Truce in July 1921, once again enabling him to avoid a direct confrontation with the complexities and compromises that followed the war and led to the treaty’.<sup>101</sup> Éamonn Mac Giolla Iasachta’s novel *Toil Dé* is also ‘primarily concerned with political and cultural ideas in the chapters leading up to the Irish Civil War, but then focuses on personal and romantic concerns’.<sup>102</sup>

This coupling of love and trauma re-emerges in civil war testimonies and was a powerful vehicle for conveying psychological trauma in a society in which emotions were often repressed. John A. Pinkman, a native of Liverpool and Free State army soldier, poignantly laments that he was compelled to break off his relationship with a Limerick woman due to the war: ‘I never saw the girl again. I felt very badly about it at the time.’<sup>103</sup> Sheila Hartnett’s remarkable memoir serialised in *The Irish Press* in 1971 also conveys the trauma of her imprisonment through narrative recourse to a lost relationship. During her time in Tralee jail, Hartnett claims she developed a connection with fellow prisoner, Mathew Moroney:

I was in love, and so was he. We watched the singing and dancing on the stage. Captain Danagher’s daughter played the violin and his son, Tommy, played the piano. When all was over I left my first love to go back to his condemned cell as I, flushed and yet apprehensive of

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<sup>99</sup> *ibid*, p. 313.

<sup>100</sup> Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega, ‘Introduction’ in Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega (eds), *Trauma and Romance in Contemporary British Literature* (Routledge, 2013), p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> Philip O’Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State: 1922–1939* (Penn State Press, 2010), p. 319.

<sup>102</sup> Philip O’Leary, ‘The Irish Renaissance, 1890–1940: literature in Irish’, in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O’Leary (eds), *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature 2 Volume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 254.

<sup>103</sup> John A. Pinkman, *In the Legion of the Vanguard* (Mercier Press, 1998), p. 151

my new experience, went back to mine. We wrote a letter to each other every day, and a kind little soldier secretly delivered his to me, and mine to him.<sup>104</sup>

Hartnett seems to blame the demise of her courtship on the repressive policies of the newly-established state. During a house raid after her release, Hartnett deplored that ‘my first love letters were confiscated and taken away as dangerous literature’.<sup>105</sup>

In O’Driscoll’s novel, Noreen’s termination of her relationship with the British soldier brings the story to its traumatic climax. The trope of ‘splitting’ evoked in the mirror scene is particularly powerful in conveying the deep psychological impact caused by the end of this romance. Noreen’s disassociative view of herself as a ‘pretty’ girl who would never again possess such innocence perhaps speaks to Robert Jay Lifton’s contention that ‘[e]xtreme trauma creates a second self... It’s a form of doubling in the traumatized person’.<sup>106</sup> This heartbreak is followed shortly after by the tragedy of the Rising. Despite her pleas to mobilise with her brothers and her wish ‘I was a man!’, Noreen stays at home with her brother’s reassurance that ‘the harder part is yours [...] the greater and better part’.<sup>107</sup> The two brothers are both killed and the novel ends with the image of three women, and an old man crouched by the fire ‘waiting for the dawn’.<sup>108</sup> The trauma evoked in *Noreen* is associated not only with the death of her brothers in the Rising, but also with her realisation of her subjugated position and the understanding that romantic desire is secondary to that of the nation. The women’s figurative resemblance to the nation is even hinted at in their names: Noreen is referred to as Dark Nosaleen throughout, while Lila evokes the symbol of the lily, which was to become a feature of Cumann na mBan campaigns in the coming years. That the surviving characters are left ‘waiting for the dawn’ again points to the linear, repetitive nature of redemptive republican trauma which defies closure.

O’Driscoll’s authorial intent is difficult to ascertain. Was she celebrating her protagonist’s deep sacrifice to the nationalist cause (in dedicating the first book to Éamon de Valera)? Or does her dedication of Book Two to a female comrade, Jenny S, suggest that the tragic plight and lost romance undercut the national narrative? Like many female revolutionaries, O’Driscoll’s writings point to the problematic relationship between the

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<sup>104</sup> Sheila Hartnett, ‘There is a great loneliness on me’, *Irish Press*, 29 December 1971, p. 9.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Robert Jay Lifton, ‘Interview’, in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 128.

<sup>107</sup> O’Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 319.

<sup>108</sup> O’Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 326.

national cause and that of women. A supporter of Fianna Fáil, O'Driscoll's 1935 short story 'The Bean-a-Tighe Looks Back' celebrates the domesticity of rural women and claims that country people were better off than ever before.<sup>109</sup> Yet two years later, she was one of a number of female writers to sign a petition opposing the 1937 Constitution.

The personal circumstances behind the writing of *Noreen* remain equally unclear. Does Noreen's escape to Glasgow mirror the author's own getaway to that same city to avoid arrest? How does the tragic death of Con relate to the death of Kelly's older sister, Catherine, who also died at the age of eighteen from bovine tuberculosis? And how did the author relate to the orphaned street girl, Estelle Amy, described in Yeatsian terms as one of the 'children of Reverie'? Estelle's father had died two years previously 'leaving behind him a broken little body that shuddered at his memory'.<sup>110</sup> Does this speak to Kelly's own loss of her father, a sea-captain who was sent to a 'sanatorium usually reserved for perilously ill inmates' on his return from the Great War, only to drown in a shipwreck in March 1922?<sup>111</sup> How does Noreen's mourning for her brothers relate to the deaths of Kelly's IRA comrades?

Perhaps the most direct confrontation with the death of comrades comes in O'Driscoll's later short story 'The Lacklander', published in *Green and Gold* magazine and advertised on the cover as a 'great and unique story of the Black and Tan terror'.<sup>112</sup> The story is set in a safe house, which was furnished with rifles, medicine chests, books and a bomb-distillery (reminiscent, perhaps, of 15 Marino Crescent). The protagonist, Maggie, works 'day in, day out [...] for the lads', rolling bandages 'round fractured limbs' and converting dressings into pull-throughs for rifles. As the struggle intensifies, Maggie's comrades are killed one after another. She claims 'I wish I was dead', and finds that the 'only familiar things' left were 'The Lacklander' and the 'little kettle'.<sup>113</sup> The Lacklander – the nickname for the much loathed Paul – too meets his death at the story's conclusion. Evoking the same sense of loneliness evident in both the poem and the novel, Maggie emerges as the sole survivor: 'You're the last of them – the old crowd – gone on me – in such a little time. It will be winter now, for me, forever'.<sup>114</sup>

Randolph asks 'How [...] did a woman who inscribed female characters into revolutionary events in her fiction – something the new literature often overlooked – become erased from the national canon?'<sup>115</sup> However, as this chapter will reveal, O'Driscoll was one

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<sup>109</sup> Garrett O'Driscoll, 'The Bean-a-Tighe Looks Back', *The Meath Chronicle*, 7 September 1935.

<sup>110</sup> O'Driscoll, *Noreen*, p. 176.

<sup>111</sup> Jody Allen Randolph, *Eavan Boland* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>112</sup> O'Driscoll, 'The Lacklander', pp 1–11.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>115</sup> Randolph, 'If no one wanted to remember', p. 144.

of quite a number of female revolutionaries to employ such methods. Indeed, the short-lived literary journal, *Green and the Gold*, shed particular light on women's active, militant roles. Contributors included Waterford Cumann na mBan member Teresa Deevy (1894–1963), later a prolific playwright. While Deevy left no writings on her revolutionary exploits, her 1924 short story, 'Just Yesterday', grapples with the events of the civil war, as does her first play, 'The Reapers', the script of which has since been lost.<sup>116</sup>

### Annie M. P. Smithson: Writing And Revolting

Another contributor to *The Green and Gold* was Waterford-based Cumann na mBan activist, Red Cross nurse, and novelist, Annie M. P. Smithson. Smithson built a writing career on chronicling the revolution, although her works have received little scholarly attention.<sup>117</sup> Though one of the best-selling novelists of the twentieth century, her romance novels are easily dismissed due to their repetitive plots and perhaps predictable religious conversion stories. Moreover, her works are less amenable to feminist readings. For Valeria Coughlan, Smithson's 'political beliefs did not impinge [...] on her writing, nor did her predominantly romantic fiction empathize with female emancipation'.<sup>118</sup> Smithson's works were dismissed throughout her career. A review in *An Lóchrann* scoffed at her first novel, *Her Irish Heritage* (1917); Smithson's preference for conversation over action led the reviewer to lament 'is ró-léir gur bean a scríobh'.<sup>119</sup> In characteristically pseudo-medical language, author Eimar O'Duffy claimed that the characters in her second novel, *The Walk of a Queen* (1922) lived in a 'state of chronic patriotic hysteria'.<sup>120</sup> Yet the screen of pious romance enabled Smithson to address transgressive topics, such as marital breakdown, the impact of stillbirth and the long-lasting psychological legacies of war.<sup>121</sup> Marie Bashford-Synnott recalls that when she was growing

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<sup>116</sup> T. Deevy, 'Just Yesterday: A Story', *Green and gold: a magazine of fiction*, etc., Vol. IV, No. 17 December 1924–March 1925, pp 268–276; Shelley Troupe, 'TSI: Teresa Deevy, or What do we know about The Reapers?', Teresa Deevy Archive; National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2014. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/7135600/\\_TSI\\_Teresa\\_Deevy\\_or\\_What\\_do\\_we\\_know\\_about\\_The\\_Reapers\\_](https://www.academia.edu/7135600/_TSI_Teresa_Deevy_or_What_do_we_know_about_The_Reapers_). (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>117</sup> Oonagh Walsh, 'Her Irish Heritage': Annie M. P. Smithson and Autobiography', *Études Irlandaises* 23, no. 1 (1998), pp 27–42.

<sup>118</sup> Valeria Coughlan 'Writing for Children', in Heather Ingman and Clíona Ó Gallchóir (eds), *A History of Modern Irish Women's Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 155.

<sup>119</sup> S. T., 'Her Irish Heritage', *An Lóchrann*, Eanáir 1918.

<sup>120</sup> Eimar O'Duffy, 'Review of *The Walk of a Queen* by Annie M. P. Smithson', *The Irish Review*, 6 January 1923, pp 70–1. Cited in Flanagan, p. 69.

<sup>121</sup> See Nicholas Allen, 'Reading Revolutions 1922–39', in Hutton and Walsh (eds), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V*, p. 95.

up, discussions of Smithson's novels provoked 'not in front of the child' signals.<sup>122</sup> And while O'Duffy rightly criticised the inflated patriotism of *The Walk of a Queen*, contemporary reviewers remarked on Smithson's representation of women's active roles in the revolution and her insights into 'the life of the girls in digs of lodgings'.<sup>123</sup>

Smithson's body of writings also clearly indicate that women's fiction proved more lucrative than memoir. While Smithson's revolutionary novel *The Walk of a Queen* (1922) was a bestseller, she also edited the memoirs of nurse Linda Kearns published that same year under the title, *In Times of Peril*. However, the memoir proved a 'hopeless failure' and did not elicit 'a single repeat order'.<sup>124</sup> Her fictional writings were also written with a testimonial aim, particularly the novel *The Marriage of Nurse Harding* (1935) in which she boldly inscribed her civil war experience as a nurse during the Battle of the Four Courts and her subsequent imprisonment.

Indeed, much of Smithson's fiction includes 'portraits of her own life' and is considered by Oonagh Walsh as a type of 'working-through'.<sup>125</sup> Described by Edna O'Brien as 'painful and breathtakingly sad'<sup>126</sup>, many of Smithson's romances include lonely female characters whose isolation is often resolved through religious conversion. These themes speak to Smithson's biography: her father, Raynor Smithson, a Protestant barrister, died when she was three years old, leaving her mother almost destitute.<sup>127</sup> After flitting away her inheritance, Smithson was required to leave school and fled Dublin to her aunt in London. Estranged from her mother, she abandoned her ambition to be a journalist, and was encouraged to pursue a career in nursing, as she was not 'blessed with much in the way of brains'.<sup>128</sup> After training as a nurse, Smithson took up a position in Gilford, Co. Down, where she fell in love with a married doctor. The breakdown of this relationship had a deep impact on Smithson; many of her later novels document ill-fated romances between doctors and nurses. Feeling 'not well either in body or in soul', she found solace in Catholicism and converted in 1907.<sup>129</sup> She also developed a strong interest in nationalist politics, which was further motivated by her discovery that her

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<sup>122</sup> Marie Bashford-Synnott, 'Annie M. P. Smithson Romantic Novelist, Revolutionary Nurse', *Dublin Historical Record* 64, no. 1 (2011), p. 47.

<sup>123</sup> 'The Walk of a Queen', by Annie M. P. Smithson', *Irish Independent*, 11 December 1922, p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Linda Kearns, *In Times of Peril: Leaves from the Diary of Nurse Linda Kearns from Easter Week, 1916, to Mountjoy, 1921* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1922). Letter to Smithson, 25 May 1922, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager's Correspondence, 1048/1/72.

<sup>125</sup> Walsh, "Her Irish Heritage", p. 28.

<sup>126</sup> Enda O'Brien, 'Extract from Mother Ireland', in Bourke et al. (eds), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, p. 1587.

<sup>127</sup> Bashford-Synnott, 'Annie M. P. Smithson', p. 49.

<sup>128</sup> Annie M. P. Smithson, *Myself-and Others. An Autobiography* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1944), p. 100.

<sup>129</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 203.

own father had supported the Fenians in 1867. By 1916, she had to be warned by her employers to keep her republican sympathies hidden. Possibly due to her politics, she resigned from her position as a nurse in Dundrum and relocated to Waterford where she provided nursing training to the local branch of Cumann na mBan.<sup>130</sup>

As a nurse, Smithson had a keen interest in the manifestations of psychic wounds on the body. Her writings reflect strongly on the medical treatments prescribed to the wounded and illustrate evolving conceptions of the psychological wounds of warfare. In an early short story, 'Hills o' Home', an Irish shell-shocked soldier in a London hospital begs a nurse to 'let me talk to you and unburden my mind', despite talking being prohibited among the patients.<sup>131</sup> Smithson was remarkably frank regarding her own bouts of depression her 1944 autobiography, even addressing her contemplation of suicide.<sup>132</sup> She was treated with a number of 'rest' cures, once in July 1921, when she was advised by Dr Kennedy to leave her nursing position in Waterford 'and return if possible to my native air'.<sup>133</sup> Letters from Mr. H. Doak of Talbot Press to Smithson in the 1940s also refer to the fact that Smithson had been prescribed 'a rest' by Dr. Young. Doak reflects on the docility such treatments demanded, teasing Smithson that she had better not be a 'very rebellious patient'.<sup>134</sup> Smithson also seems to have found solace in a sort of bibliotherapy; for her, reading W. Jacob's stories helped her to keep her 'reason' 'at a very wretched period'.<sup>135</sup>

If reading was a source of comfort, so too was writing. Smithson began her career as a novelist in response to the political turmoil of 1916. Her first novel, *Her Irish Heritage* (1917) was dedicated to the memory of the rebels of Easter 1916 and was followed by the more autobiographical *By Strange Paths* (1919). Her next novel *The Walk of a Queen* (1922) was received by her publishers in Talbot Press as the civil war erupted in May 1922.<sup>136</sup> In advance of publication, the press decided to award the novel a 100 guinea prize which Smithson later spent on provisions for wounded and injured IRA men.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Irish Military Archive, Cumann na mBan Nominal Rolls, CMB/85.

<sup>131</sup> Annie M. P. Smithson, 'Hills O' Home', *Green and gold: a magazine of fiction, etc.*, Vol. I, No. 4, September 1921, pp 255–260.

<sup>132</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 201.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid*, p. 248.

<sup>134</sup> Cited in Bashford-Synnott, 'Annie M. P. Smithson', p. 67.

<sup>135</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 200.

<sup>136</sup> Letter Annie P. Smithson, 25 May 1922, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager's Correspondence, 1048/1/72.

<sup>137</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 268.

### Split Loyalties in *The Walk of a Queen*

Although *The Walk of a Queen* is simple in its devout patriotism, it nevertheless captures a particular historical moment and highlights women's active revolutionary roles, unlike much later men's fiction. As Danae O'Regan notes, the novel employs the 'dramatic background of a divided family, men on the run, safe houses, false names and disguises, all recognisably real elements of the contemporary scene, and at the same time, of course, invaluable ingredients in an adventure story'.<sup>138</sup> O'Regan highlights, however, that Smithson's novel is less provocative than Rosamond Jacob's more progressive novel *The Troubled House*, which, although written in 1922/1923, was not published until over a decade later. Jacob was also a member of Waterford Cumann na mBan and was another contributor to *The Green and the Gold*. Her novel is set against the backdrop of Bloody Sunday in November 1920. It ends with the accidental killing of the father by his two sons; this can be read as an evocation of civil war, but may also have been informed by Jacob's reading of Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, which reflects on patricide.<sup>139</sup> While Jacob's Kate Ryan is charged with serious organisational responsibilities for the IRA, Smithson's protagonist, Geraldine Moore, works for the republican movement as an office worker and messenger. Smithson gives the men the leading revolutionary roles, as represented through the characters of twin brothers Desmond and Anthony Ryan, who were interned in Frongoch during the Rising. Smithson also downplays the use of violence, unlike Jacob, who philosophises on the ethics of violence and highlights the psychological implications of perpetrating violence through the character of Liam who is treated with a sort of psychoanalytic therapy after his involvement in the killings of Bloody Sunday.<sup>140</sup> Typical of republican propaganda, Smithson emphasises lurid violence of the Black and Tans; this is underscored by their willingness to shoot at women and through coded reference to sexual attacks on vulnerable women in rural communities.<sup>141</sup>

While O'Regan contends that 'Smithson's novels reflect a simple, unquestioning belief in the absolute virtues of republicanism and Catholicism', Smithson's more conservative (and even (internalised) misogynistic) views may have been reflective of the many women's views of the time. Moreover, as scholars of the romance genre are at pains to demonstrate, the trivial

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<sup>138</sup> Danae O'Regan, 'Representations and attitudes of republican women in the novels of Annie M. P. Smithson (1873–1948) and Rosamond Jacob (1888–1960)', in Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds), *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags* (Irish Academic Press, 2004), pp 80–95.

<sup>139</sup> See R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (Penguin UK, 2014), p. 142–143.

<sup>140</sup> Rosamond Jacob, *The Troubled House: A Novel of Dublin in the 'twenties* (Browne and Nolan, 1938), p. 88.

<sup>141</sup> Annie M. P. Smithson, *Walk of a Queen* (Cork: The Mercier Press Ltd, 1989), p. 72.

exterior of many romance novels often allowed for the treatment of more taboo topics.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, Smithson provides unusual commentary on the nature of women's work and female relationships. Geraldine dismisses 'masculine acts of mere courtesy' and contends that men only talk while women act, and it is 'women who are doing the world's work today'.<sup>143</sup> Not unlike the writing of O'Driscoll, the thwarting of gender roles which often accompanies civil conflict leads to the questioning of heterosexual love. In *The Walk of a Queen*, the 'new woman' Jill Devereux – who is introduced from behind a cloud of cigarette smoke, has short bobbed hair, and takes little interest in her appearance – finds herself infatuated by the mysterious French woman (and spy) Yvonne Delauney. She confesses that she feels like 'a lovesick boy', and further contemplates that, 'men, as a sex, seldom appealed, although as intellectual comrades she enjoyed their company'.<sup>144</sup> By the novel's conclusion, however, Jill's 'extremely unconventional' social opinions and agnostic, unorthodox religious views are resolved: she converts to Catholicism after the apparition of the ghost of Desmond and marries his brother, Anthony. Despite such resolution and conformism, Smithson's conversion narratives provide a means for the novelist to, mostly sympathetically, sketch non-conventional, non-conforming characters. Furthermore, Smithson's conversion narratives may have been a useful narrative template through which to resolve traumatic experience. As Naomi McAreevey contends in her study of seventeenth-century war testimonies, through the conversion narrative pattern, traumatic experience 'become reconstituting rather than destructive; they mark the end of an old, difficult life'.<sup>145</sup>

*The Walk of a Queen* is highly revealing in terms of the currency of ideas regarding shell shock, psychoanalysis and suggestion/hypnosis during the civil war itself. Sheila Ryan's husband returns from the war in France with 'shell shock'; he has not been 'really normal since' and resorts to drinking.<sup>146</sup> However mental health is not only the province of male combatants: Geraldine Moore is described as being on 'the verge of a physical and nervous breakdown' due to the anxieties of the conflict and her financial insecurity.<sup>147</sup> However, IRA Dr. O'Connor is equipped with the knowledge to ease her condition. Doubting the benefits of taking 'rest'

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<sup>142</sup> See Sarah S. G. Frantz and Eric Murphy Selinger (eds), *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction: Critical Essays* (McFarland, 2014).

<sup>143</sup> Smithson, *Walk of a Queen*, p. 53.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>145</sup> Naomi McAreevey, 'Reading Conversion Narratives as Literature of Trauma: Radical Religion, the Wars of the Three Kingdoms and the Cromwellian Re-Conquest of Ireland', in David Coleman (ed), *Region, Religion and English Renaissance Literature* (Routledge, 2016), p. 167.

<sup>146</sup> Smithson, *Walk of a Queen* (Cork: The Mercier Press Ltd, 1989), p. 65.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p. 89.

abroad, he treats Geraldine's insomnia with hypnosis, unbeknownst to her. O'Connor strongly endorses this new practice:

Hypnotism – or suggestion – is very removed from nonsense [...] [W]hen used properly it is now recognised by the faculty as of great value in the treatment of many diseases. It is likely in the near future that suggestion and psychoanalysis will largely take the place of drugs.<sup>148</sup>

These new secular ideas of psychoanalysis were not divorced from spiritual or metaphysical explanations, however. Smithson shared an interest in extrasensory phenomena, as did many female revolutionaries, including Maud Gonne MacBride and Rosamond Jacob.<sup>149</sup> This interest in the supernatural did not compromise Smithson's devout religious beliefs. The ghost of Desmond appears to Jill and precipitates her conversion to Catholicism. Religion itself prevents madness: it is his 'Catholic faith alone' that keeps Desmond sane before his execution, preventing him 'from putting a revolver to his head and going forth into everlasting darkness'.<sup>150</sup>

While *The Walk of a Queen* is set during the war of independence, it nevertheless speaks to the uncertainties of the split loyalties which had erupted as Smithson completed her manuscript. The novel ends with resolution achieved through the marriage of the two female protagonists. However, this sense of happily-ever-after is problematised in the final passage of the novel as civil war looms:

Peace was in Ireland, too, at last, but—for how long? Was the fight over—the battle won? Or must our people again go through the Crucible of suffering and temptation, to come forth from that fiery trial either as worthless dross—or pure gold? The answer—like the future—lies in God's Hands.<sup>151</sup>

The novel is thus a historical document expressing the uncertain possibility of civil war in real time. Indeed, as the publishers considered Smithson's stirring manuscript for an award, she was embroiled in the Battle of Dublin. On orders from Cumann na mBan headquarters, she was stationed at Moran's Hotel where she cared for injured men in the midst of some of the most violent fighting witnessed in the city. She was among the last to vacate the hotel, leaving

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<sup>148</sup> *ibid*, p. 89.

<sup>149</sup> Nadia Clare. Smith, *Dorothy Macardle: A Life* (Dublin: Woodfield Press, 2007), p. 57.

<sup>150</sup> Smithson, *The Walk of a Queen* (Cork: The Mercier Press Ltd, 1989), p. 213.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid*, p. 242.

only after a mine had been let off to ‘make matters more difficult for the enemy’.<sup>152</sup> Shortly afterwards, she was sent on a Red Cross mission to Mullingar, but on arrival she was held up at gunpoint and bundled into a van by Free State soldiers. As the van was victoriously driven into the town, it was fired on by a patrol; the sergeant – James McNamee – was shot dead before Smithson’s eyes.<sup>153</sup> It later emerged that the shooters were also on the Free State side and had attacked in a case of friendly fire. Smithson was interned for over a week before being released after threatening to go on hunger strike.

### **‘An authentic picture of ... the Irish Civil War’: *The Marriage of Nurse Harding***

Smithson depicted these events through a very thin veil of fiction in her 1935 novel *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*. She originally entitled the novel *To What End?*, pointing, perhaps, to her disillusion with the revolution. However, the editor of Talbot Press, Mr. H. Doak, was unconvinced this was a ‘selling title’ and coined a more sanitised title which evoked Mary Augusta Ward’s bestselling novel *Marriage of William Ashe* (1905).<sup>154</sup> The publishers also played up the novel’s tantalising blend of fact and fiction and promoted the book as ‘an authentic picture of the tragic events of the Irish Civil War of 1922’.<sup>155</sup> In her later memoir *Myself and Others* (1944), Smithson intertextually directs the reader back to her novel for an account of this period, noting that she had ‘described a good deal of that week in my book – *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*’.<sup>156</sup> As in Peadar O’Donnell’s two connected intertextual testimonies of civil war imprisonment – *The Knife* and *The Gates Flew Open* – Smithson’s retelling speaks both to the life-long ‘imperative to tell’ and also challenges conventional understandings of what constitutes testimonial evidence.

For contemporary reviewers, the section of *The Marriage of Nurse Harding* detailing the civil war was ‘the most interesting part of the book’<sup>157</sup> and ‘the strongest, showing first-

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<sup>152</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 255.

<sup>153</sup> Smithson does not name the sergeant. Records suggest that the incident occurred on 7 July 1922 and that deceased was James McNamee, Sergeant Major, 1st Midland Division, National Forces. Available at: <http://www.irishmedals.ie/National-Army-Killed.php> (Accessed 20 April 2020).

<sup>154</sup> Letter to Smithson, 29 January 1935, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager’s Correspondence, 1048/1/135.

<sup>155</sup> *Irish Press*, 10 December 1935, p. 10.

<sup>156</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 252.

<sup>157</sup> ‘Some of the New Novels: Romantic Tales by Irish Authors’, *Irish Independent*, 19 November 1935, p. 4.

hand knowledge and observations'.<sup>158</sup> It is hard to imagine that readers did not see through the very thin veneer of fiction. Like Smithson, Nurse Harding finds herself posted as a Red Cross nurse in Doran's Hotel; this was clearly identifiable as Moran's Hotel which was a well-known haunt of Michael Collins.<sup>159</sup> Smithson's IRA comrades are given equally flimsy disguises: Dr. Bobby Givor is patently Captain Bobby Ievers, then a medical student, and Tom Miley – described 'as belonging to one of the most ultra-Unionist families in Dublin' – is certainly the brother of R. M. Smyllie, later editor of the *Irish Times*.<sup>160</sup> Meanwhile 'Mullingar' becomes the 'fair sized town in the midlands' of Margallin.

On the surface, the tragic tone of the autobiographical account is stronger than in the novel. The civil war is described as the 'terrible time' when 'brother fought against brother' and when 'for the second time within a few years, our city was the scene of war and desolation'.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, the autobiography exhibits many of the ambiguities characteristic of women's autobiography. As reflected in the title itself, *Myself and Others*, Smithson routinely deflects attention from herself – or 'redirects the spotlight', to adopt Steele's terms.<sup>162</sup> The male officers on duty with Smithson are all identified in a way that musters them as authenticating witnesses to Smithson's testimony. Smithson also stresses the achievements of her female comrades by drawing attention to Tilly Simpson's bravery and suggesting that Kathleen O'Connell, de Valera's long-time secretary, should publish her memoirs; these references point to the emphasis on collective experience also identified by McDiarmid in the 1916 testimonies of female revolutionaries.<sup>163</sup>

While Smithson has been dismissed for her devout patriotism which is considered antagonistic to feminism, the novel contains a more feminist critique absent from the autobiography. One of the most dramatic incidents relayed by Smithson is the occasion on which all women and prisoners in the Gresham Hotel were ordered 'leave the building at once'.<sup>164</sup> The consternation these orders provoked is recorded in a number testimonies, including Carty's *Legion of the Rearguard* in which he matter-of-factly recounts that '[p]hysical force was almost needed to make them leave the Gresham'.<sup>165</sup> In the autobiography,

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<sup>158</sup> L. K., 'Review of *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*', *The Irish Book Lover*, Volumes 24-25, March-April 1936, p. 46.

<sup>159</sup> See Pádraig Yeates, *A City in Civil War – Dublin 1921–1924: The Irish Civil War* (Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2015).

<sup>160</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 93.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid*, p. 250.

<sup>162</sup> Karen Steele, 'When Female Activists Say 'I'', p. 54.

<sup>163</sup> McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution*, p. 38, p. 133.

<sup>164</sup> Smithson, *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*, p. 103.

<sup>165</sup> Carty, *Legion of the Rearguard*, p. 120.

Smithson expresses her dismay at the order, but ultimately submits to de Valera's authority: 'I felt this order bitterly. Surely as a nurse I should have been allowed to remain! But the order came from the Chief himself—thus in those days did we call de Valera—and was definite and not to be changed'.<sup>166</sup> The fictionalised rendering presents this incident as far more humiliating and crushing, and also emphasises the injustice of gender inequality:

It came as a thunderclap—hardly could they believe their ears. Never, for one moment, had they anticipated this. They might be shot dead, the building might be set on fire, but that they should be ordered to leave it—to go away just because they were women, to be sent out of the hotel, not be allowed to stay and see the finish—it was beyond belief. They even dared to protest, to detain the harassed adjutant who had come with the order. It was useless. They were to leave—and immediately.<sup>167</sup>

The novel also indirectly draws attention to the mistreatment of the female prisoners; Nora worries during her arrest about how she 'would be treated' and reminiscences after their release that the prisoners 'had a nasty' experience and had 'gone through the most unpleasant time'.<sup>168</sup> Nonetheless, Smithson also points to women's roles in reinforcing patriarchal hierarchies: Nurse Harding chastises her fellow nurse, Rose O'Daly, for daring to go out with the men to obtain essential supplies from shopkeepers, sometimes at gunpoint.

Smithson's testimonies also point to an alternative approach to textualizing trauma than the dominant emphasis on *aporia* in modernist fiction. In contrast to the Freudian idea of traumatic memory being 'unassimilated' which underscores much literary trauma theory, neurobiological studies suggest emotional stress can enhance and strengthen memory, rather than hindering it.<sup>169</sup> This approach is adopted by Smithson, as both testimonies are marked by augmented narrative detail. In the autobiography, she recalls that her memories of the civil war in Dublin are 'rather a kaleidoscopic character, a series of moving pictures, passing back and forth before me'.<sup>170</sup> Yet these memories are also highly detailed: 'We were in Moran's hotel until the Sunday afternoon, only four days, but they might be four months, so well do I remember them'.<sup>171</sup> This sensory detail is also evoked in the fictionalised testimony:

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<sup>166</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others*, p. 258.

<sup>167</sup> Smithson, *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*, p. 103.

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, p. 110, p. 134.

<sup>169</sup> Robert McNally cited in Joshua Pederson, 'Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory', *Narrative* 22, no. 3 (2014), p. 339.

<sup>170</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others. An Autobiography*, p. 252.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*, p. 252.

In after years, the events of that evening were more or less blurred in Nora's memory. She remembered sitting on the floor in one of the rooms in that public-house; she sat between two windows from both of which the men were replying to the fire of the enemy, as fast as they could; she was consumed with a terrific thirst and some one gave her a bottle of lemonade, and one of soda water: these she held in either hand, drinking first from one, then from the other, oblivious of everything but her fearful thirst. After that they had found themselves in the room of a tenement home close by, and there the woman made Nora tea. Nora often afterwards looked for that house, but she could never identify it and as she never heard the name of the woman she was not able to find her. That cup of tea—the kind she would not have touched at home, being strong and sweet—was the most delightful she had ever drunk.<sup>172</sup>

This attention to detail is particularly apparent in the descriptions of being held up at gunpoint on the bridge in Mullingar. As she recounts in the first-person:

‘Halt! Halt – or we fire!’ Our driver stopped and the van was at once surrounded. ‘Get out—put up your hands—well above your head!’

Lined up on the bridge, we stood there, hands up, facing a group of men, some in uniform, some not, revolvers in their hands [...] It was not comfortable on the bridge, my arms ached and it was chilly and dark. I never hear the words, ‘I stood on the bridge at midnight,’ without seeing again the bridge outside Mullingar town, and the particular individual who was facing me, holding a revolver in a rather shaky hand. I did wish he were not so nervous and would hold the gun in a steadier grip.<sup>173</sup>

This incident is similarly rendered in the earlier fictionalised testimony, *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*:

‘Hands up! Put them up, Line up on the bridge there, and be quick about!’

Nora Harding, standing thus on the bridge hands stretched above her head, arms growing tired, gazed into the face of the man who stood in front of her, revolver in hand. He did not seem too sure as to how it should be held, the hand holding it being decidedly shaky. She wished he did not look so nervous.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Smithson, *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*, p. 101.

<sup>173</sup> Smithson, *Myself and Others*, p. 260.

<sup>174</sup> Smithson, *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*, p. 111.

In the novel, however, Smithson further develops the emotional consequences of this incident. The fictional narrator returns to the site of trauma at the bridge at ‘Margallin’ three times, as Nora experiences recurring posttraumatic nightmares: she would ‘visit again in her sleep the bridge outside Margallin, and the man with the shaky hand would stand in front of her brandishing his revolver’.<sup>175</sup> Smithson also depicts Nora’s reaction by employing the medical language of ‘nervous tension’:

Although summer, the night was cold. Nora also suffered from the cold of nervousness—or rather nervous tension. She was no coward, but the uncertainty, the shaky hands of the man holding the revolver, the cramp in her strained arms—all combined to make her feel decidedly shivery—. <sup>176</sup>

Smithson strongly believed that ‘the mind affects the body in everyone’.<sup>177</sup> Accordingly, she mobilises the body to articulate trauma, in this case through the corporeal manifestations of ‘the coldness of nervousness’. This discussion of the emotional toll of the civil war is less apparent in the autobiography, where Smithson emphasises that the men ‘were splendid’ and highlights their professionalism by ascertaining that ‘there was no hysteria, no loss of self control amongst us’.<sup>178</sup> On the other hand, Nurse Harding’s tasks include caring for shocked civilians, including a young boy who accidentally finds himself at the heart of the battle and who was ‘losing his head entirely’. She speaks to the boy to ‘allay his fear’, gets him some hot milk, and later sends him home ‘with two cheery Boy scouts’.<sup>179</sup>

The main difference between the fictionalised account and the autobiography is that in *The Marriage of Nurse Harding* the attack on the van causes the deaths of a young republican, Hugh Hewdon, as well as the Free State sergeant. In line with popular civil war motifs, this tragedy is exacerbated by the fact that Hewdon’s father, Major Victor Hewdon, is in the Free State army and gave the order to shoot the approaching vehicle. Smithson’s novel thus literally evokes the motif of ‘brother against brother, father against son’. Yet overall the fictionalised testimony diverts very little from the actual historical event. Even the language used to describe the death of the Free State sergeant is practically identical in the two accounts:

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<sup>175</sup> *ibid*, p. 116.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid*, p. 109.

<sup>177</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others. An Autobiography*, p. 203.

<sup>178</sup> *ibid*, p. 256.

<sup>179</sup> Smithson, *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*, p. 95.

He was stone dead, literally riddled by bullets.<sup>180</sup>

He was stone dead, simply riddled with bullets.<sup>181</sup>

## The Ghostly Remnant of Civil War: Gothic Testimonies

Smithson's seemingly artless romance novels enabled her to furtively testify to her civil war experience almost ten years before she produced her autobiography. In addition to adhering to the generic conventions of the romance, her popular novels are also rich in gothic inflection. As Siobhán Kilfeather illustrates, the gothic preoccupation with the 'memory of the dead' took on particular prominence in republican memory after the failed rebellion of 1798. The formal repetition of gothic plots suited linear conceptions of republican memory as it represents a history that is always 'repeating itself' while 'its victims cannot stop themselves banging on about the same old story'.<sup>182</sup> This use of gothic inflection to link a republican past to the present is exemplified in Smithson's short story 'The Guide'. The story follows a demoralised Volunteer, Brendan Meehan, who is fleeing arrest after the 1916 Rising. He goes astray in the Dublin mountains, but is led to safety by a 'strange-looking' person 'with longish hair and a queer cloak wrapped around him'. His 'guide' was in fact the ghost of Robert Emmet.<sup>183</sup>

The affective intensity offered by gothic literary devices, and the protective shield the mode could provide, appealed to a number of female revolutionaries, including Dorothy Macardle and Máiréad Ní Ghráda whose civil war gothic fiction will be considered in this section. Indeed, the title story of Macardle's short-story collection, *Earth-bound*, mirrors the narrative of Smithson's 'The Guide'. In 'Earth-bound', two rebels escape from Mountjoy Gaol and go off-course in the Wicklow mountains in the depths of winter. The sense of history repeating itself is again evoked as the rebels are saved from a search party – and certain death of frostbite – by the ghost of Art O'Neill. O'Neill had died of hypothermia in the same location – Glenmalure, Co. Wicklow – in 1591 after escaping from Dublin castle with Aodh Ruadh O'Donnell.

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<sup>180</sup> *ibid*, p. 111.

<sup>181</sup> Smithson, *Myself-and Others. An Autobiography*, p. 262.

<sup>182</sup> Siobhán Kilfeather 'The Gothic novel', in John Wilson Foster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 81.

<sup>183</sup> Annie M. P. Smithson, 'The Guide: A Story', *Green and Gold*, Vol. I, No. 2, March 1921, pp 81–85; Annie M. P. Smithson, *The Guide* (Catholic Truth Society, 1923).

### Dorothy Macardle's palimpsestic testimony in *Earth-bound*

Macardle's short-story collection *Earth-bound* (1924) stands out from popular republican gothic fables, however. Not only were the stories written *in extremis* during her civil war imprisonment, Macardle also ably evokes the gothic to address questions of mental illness and to covertly introduce the private traumatic experience of the author into the public domain. This interface between the gothic mode and psychological trauma is widely recognised, as the gothic provided a host of strategies with which to tease out the ungraspable questions of reoccurring, invasive posttraumatic effects.<sup>184</sup> As Ashlee Joyce outlines, the 'genre's horrible subject matter – its haunted settings, monstrous figures, return of the repressed, and the like – is [...] closely linked with Freudian psychology, and with unspoken or unacknowledged collective anxieties'.<sup>185</sup> Particularly in the aftermath of war, the gothic facilitated the exploration of possible links between the living and the dead.<sup>186</sup> The gothic also evokes the formal characteristics of testimony, as it emphasizes speaking about repressed experience of trauma and juxtaposes confused personal anxieties against 'dominant discourses of order and regulation'.<sup>187</sup>

Macardle described herself as an 'unashamed' 'propagandist' for the republican side and was one of the most significant chroniclers of the civil war. Reared in a prosperous Dundalk business family, Macardle joined Cumann na mBan late 1918 or early 1919. She was a professor of English in Alexandra College and encouraged a number of her pupils, including Mary Manning, to take up writing. She was dismissed from her position, however, after her arrest in November 1922. After her release in April/May 1923, she published a number of propagandist articles in *Éire*, a republican paper published in Glasgow to avoid suppression, and attempted to publish a collection of poetry.<sup>188</sup> *Earth-bound* too was reluctantly rejected by Talbot Press who felt there was no market for short stories. It was published thus in the United States in 1924 and subsequently self-published from Countess Markievicz's residence in Frankfort House, Dartry, and by Emtion Press, Dublin. That same year, Macardle's influential account of the atrocities of the civil war, *The Tragedies of Kerry* (1924), was produced by Emtion Press, Dublin. Macardle outlined in the foreword that her aim was provide an

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<sup>184</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Routledge, 2013), p. 98.

<sup>185</sup> Ashlee Joyce, 'Gothic Misdirections: Troubling the Trauma Fiction Paradigm in Pat Barker's *Double Vision*', *English Studies* 100, no. 4 (19 May 2019), pp 461–77.

<sup>186</sup> Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 98.

<sup>187</sup> Maria Beville, 'Gothic Memory and the Contested Past: Framing Terror', in Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Maria Beville (eds), *The Gothic and the Everyday: Living Gothic* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), pp 64–65.

<sup>188</sup> 4 October 1923, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager's Correspondence, 1048/1/80.

‘infinitesimal fragment of the truth’ based on her ‘intimate question of witnesses’, and that the account consisted of ‘clear, indisputable facts [...] without art or artifice, as they were told’.<sup>189</sup>

Yet such denial of ‘art or artifice’ is complicated by the fact that even Macardle’s historical writing evokes the gothic. Her most significant work, *The Irish Republic* (1937), is a comprehensive, if partial, history of the republican movement from 1800 to 1925. As Irina Rupp Malone points out, the gothic is evoked in the opening pages as Macardle renders the Republic as ‘an invisible within a visible, an intangible within the tangible State’.<sup>190</sup> This gothic inflection reflects the popularity of spiritualism and psychoanalysis that informed growing ideas regarding psychic wounding. Like a number of republican prisoners, Macardle regretted that ‘scientists and doctors were dismissive of psychical research’.<sup>191</sup> She joined the Society for Psychical Research (S.P.R.) in 1920 and attended séances, perhaps in an attempt to contact her younger brother, Kenneth, who died in the Battle of the Somme in 1916.<sup>192</sup> Her later novels further illustrate her interest in the extrasensory and cast doubt on psychoanalysis by indicating that Freud himself had come around to the ‘idea of telepathy’.<sup>193</sup>

The importance of collaborative witnessing in the telling of trauma is enacted in the very structure of *Earth-bound*. The nine stories are situated with frame narrative of a group of exiled Irish activists sheltering in the headquarters of a republican newspaper, the *Tri-Colour*, in Philadelphia. Each story solicits testimony from an ever-growing body of exiles; these include two IRA men seeking refuge and rehabilitation in Philadelphia, a Norwegian folklorist, a survivor of hunger strike, a priest, an artist, a domestic servant and the wife of an IRA leader. The stories are often told on the last night of the exile’s stay and emphasise the speaker’s need to exteriorise that which has been previously unsaid. This ‘imperative to tell’ is also accompanied by the need ‘to be heard’; Liam Daly confesses that ‘there is a story I have to tell – sometime, somewhere’, but is only willing to speak ‘if you’ll listen’.<sup>194</sup> The sympathetic reception of these exercises in truth-telling supported their narration: Nesta McAllister is known for her ‘sensitive response to one’s precise meaning [...] which made the talk grow subtler

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<sup>189</sup> Dorothy Macardle, *Tragedies of Kerry 1922–1923* (Dublin: Emtan Press, 1924).

<sup>190</sup> Irina Rupp Malone, ‘Spectral History: The Ghost Stories of Dorothy Macardle’, *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas* 9, no. 1 (2011), p. 95.

<sup>191</sup> Smith, *Dorothy Macardle*, p. 57. Medical student and republican prisoner Ernie O’Malley also questioned his medical treatment, noting in his civil war letters that ‘doctors tell me all kinds of stupid things at times, but I tell them they have to reckon with the spirit and not the body’. Ernie O’Malley and Richard English, *Prisoners: The Civil War Letters of Ernie O’Malley* (Poolbeg, 1991), p. 50.

<sup>192</sup> Smith, *Dorothy Macardle*, p. 57. See Society for Psychical Research, *Proceedings*, 1946.

<sup>193</sup> Dorothy Macardle, *The Unforeseen* (Doubleday, Incorporated, 1946), p. 206.

<sup>194</sup> Macardle, *Earth-bound*, p. 46.

when she was there'.<sup>195</sup> The translation of these traumatic stories from the repressed unconscious to a coherent sharable story that is received orally by a confirming audience is also linked to the public transmission of these oral stories *in print*. In the story 'The Prisoner', the ghost of the prisoner of 1798 begs his comrade to record his story on his behalf, proclaiming that 'You must tell it [the truth] – it must be remembered; *it must be written down*' (my emphasis).<sup>196</sup> The publication of these stories is facilitated by the editors of *Tri-Colour* who transcribe both Liam Daly's and Nannie Maher's testimonies for publication; the former relates to Daly's near-death experience on hunger strike, while the latter recounts Maher's brother's brutal death at the hands of the Black and Tans.

The collection thus reflects on the cathartic potential of truth-telling, the significance of attuned listening and the translation of oral stories to public *written* testimonies in order to contest official memory-making. Yet given such an emphasis on the collective, interpersonal dynamics of testimony, how does *Earth-bound* testify to Macardle's own experience? Like many female revolutionaries, much of Macardle's published writings lack introspection. She frequently deflects from her experience to focus on that of more renowned female figures, while her witness statement to the Bureau of Military History is only three pages long.<sup>197</sup> She also often perpetuates traditionally-defined gender roles, claiming that 'the history of the Republican army can never be told unless by *men* who fought in it' (my emphasis).<sup>198</sup> However, as Leeann Lane contends, fiction was a 'dissident vehicle of expression' for Macardle.<sup>199</sup>

### **'On The Verge Of Madness': Testifying to Hungerstiking**

On the surface, at least, the stories in *Earth-bound* reflect very little on Macardle's own prison experience. One critic celebrated that '[h]appily only in one of them, the last, is there any allusion to the civil war'<sup>200</sup>. However, as Lane contends, Macardle's lived prison experience 'centrally informs' the collection.<sup>201</sup> Even the orality of the tales reflect their place of composition; as in prison, the latest arrivals are invited to give their accounts while their

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<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>197</sup> See Nadia Clare Smith, 'From Dundalk to Dublin: Dorothy Macardle's Narrative Journey on Radio Éireann', *The Irish Review*, no. 42 (2010), pp 27–42.

<sup>198</sup> Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic: a Documented Chronicle of the Anglo-Irish Conflict and the Partitioning of Ireland, with a Detailed Account of the Period 1916–1923* (Dublin: Irish Press, 1937), p. 24.

<sup>199</sup> Leeann Lane, *Dorothy Macardle* (University College Dublin Press, 2019), p. 230.

<sup>200</sup> Desmond Clarke and Stephen J. Brown (eds), *Ireland in Fiction: V. 2: A Guide to Irish Novels, Tales, Romances and Folklore* (Cork: Royal Carbery Books, 1985).

<sup>201</sup> Lane, *Dorothy Macardle*, p 112.

comrades/fellow inmates lend a witnessing ear. Macardle subtly testifies to her own lived prison experience also, most notably in ‘The Prisoner’ and ‘A Story Without an End’.

‘The Prisoner’ is the only story which directly deals with incarceration. Considered a ‘heroic male narrative[] of rebellion’<sup>202</sup>, it documents the hallucinations of a hunger striker, Liam Daly, in a condemned cell in Kilmainham who finds solace in the company of a ‘young lad with thin, starved features and deep eye-sockets like a skull’.<sup>203</sup> Redolent of republican gothic tales, the ‘young lad’ is in fact a ghost who was condemned to death for his support of the 1798 rebellion. This disruption in temporality and chronology furthers the sense of linear displacement associated with traumatic experience. For the prisoner, time becomes a ‘kind of a whirlpool – [...] going round and round with you, so that you’d never come to anything, even death, only back again to yesterday and round to today and back to yesterday again’.<sup>204</sup> The story provides insight into the prisoner’s distress through first-person narration:

I was in a punishment cell, a ‘noisome dungeon’ right enough, complete with rats and all, dark always, and dead quiet; none of the others were in that wing. It amounted to solitary confinement, of course, and on hunger-strike that’s bad, the trouble is to keep hold of your mind. I think it was about the thirtieth day I began to be afraid – afraid of going queer. It’s not a pretty story.<sup>205</sup>

It is the company of the ghost that saves Daly from ‘the verge of madness’; he is released in a state of unconsciousness and survives the strike.<sup>206</sup> The story also contains anti-clerical sentiment as the boy condemns the ‘fiend’ of a priest who visited his cell;<sup>207</sup> this indicates the protection provided by the gothic mode, unlike O’Donnell’s later memoir, *The Gates Flew Open*, which was singled out for censure for similar commentary.

According to Gerardine Meaney, Macardle’s use of a male narrator can be ascribed to the fact that she ‘could not or would not write of female hunger-strikers’.<sup>208</sup> Indeed, Macardle also published a poem entitled ‘The Prisoner’ in which the male prisoner’s finds solace in the idea that his sacrifice will live on through Ireland, personified as a woman:

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<sup>202</sup> Jennifer Molidor, ‘Dying for Ireland: Violence, Silence, and Sacrifice in Dorothy Macardle’s *Earth-Bound: Nine Stories of Ireland* (1924)’, *New Hibernia Review* 12, no. 4 (2008), p. 44.

<sup>203</sup> Macardle, *Earth-bound*, p. 49.

<sup>204</sup> *ibid* p. 47.

<sup>205</sup> *ibid*, p. 47.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid*, p. 54.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>208</sup> Gerardine Meaney, ‘Identity and Opposition: Women’s Writing’, in Angela Bourke et al. (eds), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing V: Irish Women’s Writing and Traditions* (Cork: Cork University Press), p. 978.

He dwells within a shadow dim as death;  
The barren hours go o'er him, slow and dreary;  
Yet, because he has faith  
And to no other queen will bend his knee,  
There is a crown still on the brow of Éire,  
And her bright spirit lives unquelled and free.<sup>209</sup>

Nonetheless, the use of a fictive male narrating subject, like O'Driscoll's use of a (male) pseudonym, could be exploited as an 'authorizing strategy'. As Susan Lanser contends, the male mask tempers 'a women's usurpation of public authority' thus enabling the treatment of more transgressive subject matter.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, despite the traditionally-imagined gender norms in her poetry and journalistic pieces<sup>211</sup>, the gendering of the prisoner as male is complicated by the story's dedication to 'E. C'. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend that women's narratives constitute palimpsests in which the 'surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning'.<sup>212</sup> This palimpsestic effect is achieved in Macardle's *Earth-bound* by the dedication of the stories to one of her fellow revolutionaries and inmates, whose biographic experience often directly relates to the stories.<sup>213</sup>

E. C. is most likely Macardle's fellow prisoner Eithne Coyle (1897–1985). Indeed, Coyle was well known for responding to any injustices with a casual, 'why don't we have a hunger strike?' and was purportedly on her seventh strike by November 1923.<sup>214</sup> She was one of the first women to be arrested in the civil war and went on hunger strike in September 1922 in protest against being kept in an isolated cell, like 'The Prisoner'.<sup>215</sup> As Coyle recalls, 'I did not sleep during the 6 weeks in that awful barracks. Pay night in that place is something I can never forget. I decided if I was kept there much longer that I would be a fit subject for the

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<sup>209</sup> Macardle, 'The Prisoner', *Éire*, 30 June 1923, p. 2.

<sup>210</sup> Susan Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 92.

<sup>211</sup> Lane, *Dorothy Macardle*, p. 112.

<sup>212</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press, 1980), p. 73.

<sup>213</sup> See Molitor, 'Dying for Ireland', pp 43–61; Abigail L. Palko, 'Queer Seductions of the Maternal in Dorothy Macardle's *Earth-Bound*', *Irish University Review* 46, no. 2 (25 October 2016), pp 287–308.

<sup>214</sup> de Paor, 'Blaze Away With Your Gun', p. 9.

<sup>215</sup> Eithne Coyle, 'Reminiscences of Eithne O'Donnell (née Coyle)', 12 July 1972, [Unpublished memoir] Kilmainham Gaol Archive, 20MS-1B33-19, p. 17–18.

nearest lunatic asylum'.<sup>216</sup> Margaret Buckley euphemistically insinuates that Coyle's mistreatment may have included a sexual threat, as her 'cell was invaded at all hours of the night by members of a drunken guard, an undisciplined mob, until sheer force of terrible and unchristian conditions compelled her to go on hunger-strike for more human conditions'.<sup>217</sup> The mental derangement described in 'The Prisoner' can thus be read as an act of bearing witness to Coyle's experience of solitary confinement.

The story too could also be a reflection on Macardle's own hunger strike experience.<sup>218</sup> On its initial publication in *Éire* in September 1924, 'The Prisoner' was titled 'The Prisoners: 1798–1923'.<sup>219</sup> The original tagline firmly locates the Liam Daly's plight in the context of the civil war and its omission on the second publication is illustrative of the widespread blurring of historical dates to avoid the more contentious internecine strife. The inscription 'Mountjoy/Kilmainham' at the end of the second version of the story also points to its composition between Macardle's time in Mountjoy and her time in Kilmainham, which included her weeklong hunger strike.<sup>220</sup> As Irina Rupp Malone asserts, this revelation of the location of the story's production suspends the feeling of safety offered by the exiles' haven in Philadelphia as 'the readers realize that what they have taken to be a fictional account may in fact be a survival-account of the author's own imprisonment'.<sup>221</sup> Lane too agrees that Macardle 'may have rewritten the story in light of her own involvement in a hunger strike'.<sup>222</sup>

### **‘Tis Better For Me To Tell’: Collaborative Witnessing**

The final story in *Earth-bound* also employs a palimpsestic strategy to address the traumatic experience of the female prisoners, and possibly Macardle's own experience. In 'A Story Without an End', the reserved Nesta McAllister, who has recently fled to Philadelphia with her IRA husband, struggles to divulge her anxieties to the group of attentive exiles. As her face 'had gone white and her eyes wide and dark', Frank suggests that it would be 'better'

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<sup>216</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>217</sup> Buckley, *The Jangle of the Keys*, p. 15; see McAtackney 'Gender, Incarceration and Power Relations', p. 56.

<sup>218</sup> Intriguingly, as Palko highlights, the only other story in the collection signed off from Kilmainham, 'The Return of Niav' also addresses the question of hunger striking, albeit less openly so, as the figure of Neoineen refuses to take food in a protest against her mother's absence.

<sup>219</sup> Dorothy Macardle, 'The Prisoners: 1798–1923', *Éire*, 13 September 1924.

<sup>220</sup> Macardle refused food for some time in November 1922 and participated in a weeklong hunger strike from 23 March 1923. Lane, *Dorothy Macardle*, p. 68.

<sup>221</sup> Malone, 'Spectral History', p. 100.

<sup>222</sup> Lane, *Dorothy Macardle*, p. 71.

not ‘telling it’.<sup>223</sup> However, Nesta refuses to repress her story and, convinced of the cathartic benefits of narration, maintains, ‘No, no – I’ll get rid of it – ’tis better for me to tell’.<sup>224</sup> Nesta relates a dream in which she saw four men carrying a dying IRA man on a stretcher into her home.<sup>225</sup> Her first dream is followed by a second, more disturbing, dream in which her husband is executed in prison:

There were high stone walls and a dark yard; everything was cold; it was dawn. The yard was full of stones; it was narrow and long; there was a dark hole dug in the earth. There was a man standing near it, against the wall; his hands were behind his back and his eyes were bandaged; there was a bright red mark over his heart. It was Roger; he was going to be killed. Soldiers formed up with rifles and stood covering him. There were nine; I counted them; it was all quite clear. [...] I heard him shout ‘Fire!’ and heard the volley, and saw Roger fall, and saw that man go over to him with his revolver and shoot – Oh, it was horrible. I can’t.<sup>226</sup>

Nesta hopes that her audience will reassure her that ‘the dream could never come true’. However, such reassurance is difficult to provide, especially when Nesta recounts that her first nightmare came true. Not only that, but the man who was brought into her home on the stretcher appeared as the executioner in her second dream. Nesta remains in disbelief as the execution party were dressed in ‘green uniforms’. For Nesta, it was ‘so absurd’ that ‘it couldn’t come true’.<sup>227</sup> For the reader, however, the green uniforms are clearly a reference to the uniform of the Free State army. As Malone contends, ‘[i]t is this reality, rather than the supernatural, that becomes the source of dread for the reader’.<sup>228</sup>

Once again, the palimpsestic effect of the dedication adds intensity to the story. In this case, the story is dedicated to N. C. – most likely Macardle’s fellow prisoner, Nora Connolly. Famously Connolly’s father James Connolly, was placed on a chair before his execution in Kilmainham for his role in the 1916 Rising.<sup>229</sup> Macardle observed in her prison diary that Nora was distressed at being imprisoned in the same location: ‘She is struggling out of a nervous breakdown which has hung over her ever since her father was executed in this prison’.<sup>230</sup> Nora suffered insomnia during her imprisonment due to her ‘nerves’ ‘giving way’ and even

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<sup>223</sup> Macardle, *Earth-Bound*, p. 104.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>226</sup> *ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*, p. 106, p. 108.

<sup>228</sup> Malone, ‘Spectral History’, p. 102.

<sup>229</sup> Nora Connolly O’Brien, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 286, 21 July 1949, p. 54.

<sup>230</sup> Diary entry for 7 February 1923, cited in Lane, *Dorothy Macardle*, p. 79.

collapsed from fatigue.<sup>231</sup>

Aside from conjuring up an image of James Connolly's execution, the story is dated 'Mountjoy, December 1922'. This is patently a reference to the executions of Liam Mellows, Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joseph McKelvey and Richard Barrett on 8 December 1922, in reprisal for the assassination of pro-treaty TD, Seán Hales. While there were many executions, this particular event occupies a significant place in republican memory (as discussed in O'Donnell's memoir in Chapter Two). Once again, the dedication to Nora Connolly is not coincidence given Connolly's strong ties with Liam Mellows, who she had 'escaped' out of Reading Gaol in early 1916. As she outlined in her 1981 recollections: 'It had a terrible effect when Liam and the three other Republicans were shot later that year. [...] I had just gone out of the house for something, and bought a newspaper and opened it, and saw that Liam had been executed. I nearly died'.<sup>232</sup>

Yet the story also draws on Macardle's own experience. Nora Connolly was not in fact imprisoned until after the December 1922 executions. Macardle, however, was interned in Mountjoy at this time and alludes to the executions in her poem 'Mountjoy':

How could we bear the death  
Of noble men in the dawn  
The volley that broke our breath  
Their lives with the echoes gone;  
But that we knew their blood  
Would cry from the altar-stone  
Till the hearts of the multitude  
Grew as brave as their own?<sup>233</sup>

While the poem evokes the collective ('broke our breath') and is hagiographical in its focus on the republican dead ('brave as their own'), 'A Story without an End' offers a more pronounced individual female view on the distress caused by witnessing execution. Indeed, the fiction even complicates such a belief in the redemption of male sacrifice, as Nesta's intimate fears for her husband's safety challenge the republican narrative of celebrated martyrdom.<sup>234</sup> Nesta's account of hearing the shots of the execution party – 'There were nine; I counted them;

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<sup>231</sup> Nora Connolly O'Brien, *We Shall Rise Again* (Mosquito Press, 1981), pp 54–55.

<sup>232</sup> *ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>233</sup> Dorothy Macardle, 'Mountjoy', *Éire*, 2 June 1923.

<sup>234</sup> Molidor, 'Dying for Ireland', p. 51.

it was all quite clear’ – is disguised testimony to the author’s own experience. Macardle and her fellow prisoners were told of the executions and waited from dawn to hear the shots from the women’s section of Mountjoy. As Peadar O’Donnell recalled in *The Gates Flew Open*, ‘Dorothy Macardle has told us of it. They heard the volley and then they heard the single shots which they counted. There were *nine single shots* [...]’ (my emphasis).<sup>235</sup>

### **Exploiting the Peripheral Position of the Irish Language: Máireád Ní Ghráda’s *An Bheirt Dearbhráthar Agus Scéalta Eile***

Macardle’s later novels – *Uneasy Freehold* (1941), *The Unforeseen* (1946), and *The Dark Enchantment* (1953) – continued to exploit gothic conventions. Indeed, the gothic mode took on increasing significance in women’s writing in the early years of the Free State. According to Meaney, ‘women’s fiction in this period often blurs the generic boundaries between gothic and almost every other genre’.<sup>236</sup> Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin has illustrated that marginalized female activists intentionally mobilised gothic motifs in the post-revolutionary period; members of Cumann na mBan described themselves as ‘Ghosts’ from 1927, reflecting how they ‘understood themselves as ghostly revenants in the public life of the new Free State’.<sup>237</sup>

Máireád Ní Ghráda’s short-story collection, *An Bheirt Dearbhráthar agus Scéalta Eile* [The Two Brothers and Other Stories] (1939), also draws on gothic occurrences to evoke the ‘unspeakable’ traumatic legacy of the revolutionary period. The collapse of family and communal ties in civil war is evoked through Ní Ghráda’s recourse to established civil war metaphors, such as brothers divided (‘An Bheirt Dearbhráthar’), the Cain-Abel motif (‘Cain’), father-son killing (‘An Díthreabhach’), and the romance triangle (‘An Bheirt Dearbhráthar’). In a review of her collection in *The Irish Times*, Brian Ó Nualláin, better known as Flann O’Brien, noted that, despite some ‘false notes’, Ní Ghráda ‘is more successful than many who have bigger names among her contemporaries’.<sup>238</sup> Even though O’Leary considers Ní Ghráda

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<sup>235</sup> Peadar O’Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open* (J Cape, 1932), p. 85.

<sup>236</sup> Gerardine Meaney, ‘Fiction, 1922–1960’, in Clíona Ó Gallchoir and Heather Ingman (eds), *A History of Modern Irish Women’s Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp 187–203.

<sup>237</sup> Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, ‘Seeing Ghosts: Gothic Discourses and State Formation’, *Éire-Ireland* 47, no. 3 (14 November 2012), p. 37.

<sup>238</sup> Ó Nualláin, B. [Myles na gCopaleen], ‘Books in Irish’, *The Irish Times*, 31 August, 1940, p. 5; cited in Breandán Ó Conaire, *Myles na Gaeilge: Lámhleabhar ar shaothar Gaeilge Bhrian Ó Nualláin* (An Clóchomhar Tta: 1986), p. 246.

as ‘the most original Gaelic writer of fiction on the war’,<sup>239</sup> her war stories have received scant critical attention. Her decision to write in Irish – a language that was facing sharp decline in the opening decades of the state – intensifies her deployment of gothic motifs to reflect the political marginalisation of female revolutionaries. Her collection also indicates that the peripheral position of the Irish language could accommodate perspectives prohibited from mainstream discourse.

A native of the ‘breac-Gaeltacht’ of Kilmaley, Co. Clare, Ní Ghráda was active in Cumann na mBan and the Gaelic League from the aftermath of the Rising. She was employed as a *timire* (organiser) for Ernest Blythe, who was minister for Trade and Commerce in the First Dáil, and served as secretary to Blythe throughout the civil war.<sup>240</sup> As Blythe recounts, Ní Ghráda was tasked with important responsibilities: ‘[She] interviewed any person in town or through the country I could not arrange to meet myself owing to being on the run. She was very good at the job and could be relied on to handle any negotiation very well’.<sup>241</sup> Ní Ghráda’s short stories are thus an important addition to the relatively small archive of writings by women who supported the Free State side.<sup>242</sup>

Like most of the authors discussed in this chapter, Ní Ghráda’s personal papers never survived. One of the most insightful sources of information into her activism is a radio interview with Aedín Ní Chaoimh in which Ní Ghráda recalls her imprisonment in November 1919 for ‘obstructing thoroughfares’ when selling Gaelic League flags on Grafton Street.<sup>243</sup> Her imprisonment is recounted as a period of excitement: ‘[D]o thaitin sé liom go seoigh, bhíos óg ag an am agus ba bhreá liom é, an dtuigeann tú, bhuel mar píosa spóirt a cheapas a bheith sa bpríosún’.<sup>244</sup> Contemporary newspaper reports suggest that Ní Ghráda’s activism was more militant. The flagsellers refused to give their names or addresses, refused any packages not addressed in Irish, and three of the flagsellers held in Chancery Police Station caused havoc:

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<sup>239</sup> O’Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State*, p. 326.

<sup>240</sup> Ní Ghráda married Civic Guard Risteard Ó Ciosáin at the Church of St. Mary’s, Haddington Rd, Dublin on 1 July 1923. Church Records, Superintendent Registrar’s District of Dublin. Available at: [Civil Records, irishgenealogy.ie](http://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie). (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>241</sup> Ernest Blythe, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 939, 12 April 1954, p. 117.

<sup>242</sup> See Lil Conlon, *Cumann na mBan and the Women of Ireland, 1913–25* (Kilkenney People Ltd., 1969); Kathleen Keyes McDonnell, *There Is a Bridge at Bandon: A Personal Account of the Irish War of Independence* (Mercier Press, 1972); and Kathleen McKenna, *A Dáil Girl’s Revolutionary Recollections* (Original Writing Limited, 2014).

<sup>243</sup> ‘Margaret O’Grady’, Mountjoy Prison, General Register of Prisoners, 6 November 1919, Irish Prison Registers 1790–1924. Available at: [findmypast.ie](http://findmypast.ie).

<sup>244</sup> ‘Of course I thoroughly enjoyed it, I was young at the time and I loved it, well I thought then it was a bit of fun to be in prison.’ Máiréad Ní Ghráda, Interview [with Aedín Ní Chaoimh], *Dá bhFaighinn Mo Rogha*, RTÉ Radio, 28 March 1969. RTÉ Sound Archive, AA3326.

When placed outside the door of the reserve room in a yard, they took up two delph mugs and smashed both the windows and the mugs. Five panes of glass were valued at 3s. each, and two mugs at 1s. each were broken. The defendants displayed the utmost indifference to the proceedings, laughing and conversing with each other while the case proceeded. One read a newspaper when her companions were not talking to her. They replied to questions by saying that they did not recognise the Court. [...] As they left the dock they shouted, ‘Up the Republic.’ ‘Up de Valera.’<sup>245</sup>

By the time Ní Ghráda was writing her stories in the early thirties, her hopes for the new State had arguably dwindled. Despite earning a reputation as the first female radio announcer in Ireland or Britain for 2RN radio, Ní Ghráda was expected to retire from her position in May 1935 in accordance with Fianna Fáil’s institutionalisation of the marriage-ban in order to create positions for male civil servants who had been dismissed on political grounds.<sup>246</sup> Ironically, Ní Ghráda’s husband, Richard Kissane, was reinstated on the condition that his wife resigned. Ní Ghráda also encountered obstacles in producing her politically-themed works. After leaving her full-time radio position, Ní Ghráda wrote a play *Stailc Ocráis* [Hunger Strike], based on Frank Gallagher’s hunger strike journal *Days of Fear*. The play seems to have been rejected by the Abbey Theatre in 1939.<sup>247</sup> The Abbey Theatre minute books suggest that another English-language play, ‘Brothers’ by ‘Máiréad Kissane’, was also refused.<sup>248</sup> Although the manuscript is not extant, the title is reminiscent of the title of her short-story collection. The ‘brother against brother’ motif was not far removed from Ní Ghráda’s personal circumstances. Her husband, Richard, was a member of the Free State civic guard, while his brother, Éamonn, was on the republican side and de Valera’s future parliamentary secretary.<sup>249</sup>

Despite difficulties in producing her stage works, Ní Ghráda’s successfully published her revolutionary short stories in Irish. Ironically, the collection was published by state

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<sup>245</sup> ‘Police Station Windows Smashed’, *The Irish Times*, 4 November 1919, p. 7.

<sup>246</sup> Eileen Morgan, “‘Unbroken Service’: Máiréad Ní Ghráda’s Career at 2RN, Ireland’s First Broadcasting Station, 1927–35”, *Éire-Ireland* 37, no. 3–4 (2002), p. 56.

<sup>247</sup> The play was finally produced and published three decades later; it won a £50 Art Council prize in 1960, was performed in An Damer theatre in 1962, published in 1966, and produced by theatre groups nationwide during the fifty-year commemorations of the Rising. For a discussion of the play see Philip O’Leary, *An Underground Theatre: Major Playwrights in the Irish Language 1930–80* (University College Dublin Press, 2017); Siobhán Ní Bhrádaigh, *Máiréad Ní Ghráda: ceannródaí drámaíochta* (Indreabhán, Conamara: Clo Iar-Chonnachta, 1996).

<sup>248</sup> The play was initially accepted on 7 August 1936. This decision was overturned a week later and ‘detailed criticism’ returned to the authoress ‘so as to enable her if she so wished, to improve the play and make it possible to produce’. Abbey Minute Books, Special Collections, National University of Ireland, Galway.

<sup>249</sup> Morgan, “‘Unbroken Service’”, p. 74

publisher Oifig an tSoláthair, yet it cast a critical eye on the institutions of the Free State. Ní Ghráda's bold confrontation with the civil war underscores the forthright feminist agenda associated with her later play *An Triail* (1964) which staged the mistreatment of unmarried mothers. *An Triail* was based on a story Ní Ghráda had heard in her youth; the twelve stories in *An Bheirt Dearbhráthar agus Scéalta Eile* are also set in rural Co. Clare and may too draw on local histories. Like Macardle's *Earth-bound*, a number of the stories contain frame narratives, or stories within stories, as city visitors in Clare in the early 1930s elicit testimony from locals to the tragic events of the revolutionary period. The lingering psychological effects of war are materially evident in blood stains in an abandoned house, in the physical scar on the forehead of a local barfly, while liminal ghostly figures haunt the landscape.

The title story is presented as the oral testimony of a Dublin-based civil servant: 'Roibeárd Ó Laidhigh, stát-seirbhíseach, atá ag caint'.<sup>250</sup> Sent to west Clare by the office of Public Works to investigate the need to build a harbour, Ó Laighigh is unnerved by his barren surroundings which are void of any mortal soul.<sup>251</sup> He chances on a 'spéalán de thigh leath-déanta' and through the window sees a dark patch in the corner of the room beside a well-rusted chisel and hammer.<sup>252</sup> After fleeing to his hotel, Ó Laighigh learns about the abandoned house from his hostess. The blood stains mark the place where IRA rebel Seán Mac Cárthaigh was executed by Black and Tans. His own brother, Roibeard, informed on him after discovering Seán in the company of Roibeard's young bride-to-be, Helen. The present-day consequences of such a fall out between brothers is brought home at the end of the story, when it emerges that the mythical Helen – 'an spéirbhean gur deineadh ár agus argan agus dortadh fola le grádh di' – is in fact Neilí, the maid.<sup>253</sup> 'An Bheirt Dearbhráthar' not only reflects the lingering psychological legacies of war, it also underscores the disjunction between the urban civil service and the needs of rural Ireland, while also subverting the stereotypical female figures characteristic of many revolutionary stories.

This story is one of a number of testimonies in the collection by urban-based civil servants and travellers (see 'Cain', 'Airgead i bhFolach', and 'Díthreabhach') who, following stock gothic motifs, venture from the enlightened modern city to the desolate and recalcitrant territories of rural Clare. In 'An Díthreabhach' a young couple get lost in the mist during a Gaelic League trip to the countryside. A ghostly figure points them to safety; they compare

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<sup>250</sup> 'It is Roibeárd Ó Laidhigh, civil servant, speaking'. Máiréad Ní Ghráda, *An Bheirt Dearbhráthar agus Scéalta Eile* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1939), p. 9.

<sup>251</sup> *ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>252</sup> 'A half-built ramshackle house'. *ibid*, p. 13.

<sup>253</sup> 'The fair lady for the love of whom slaughter, plunder and bloodshed was committed', *ibid*, p. 27.

him to the supernatural creature Erlkönig from German folklore. However, the man's limbo-like existence is the result of the 'gníomh gránda mínádúrtha' he committed during the civil war.<sup>254</sup> Having enlisted in the Free State army, he unintentionally shot his own son on the republican side, and has lived as a hermit since, not speaking a word.

These visits may reflect Ní Ghráda's own trips throughout the countryside on behalf of Minister Blythe. While many of the stories are narrated by flâneur-like narrators who travel through the countryside with a distinctly male privilege, the complexities of women's revolutionary experience are highlighted throughout. Certain stories seem to nourish traditional perceptions of national womanhood. In 'Sos Comhraic' [The Truce], the announcement of the Truce is celebrated by the women who mobilise outside the Lord Mayor's residence to pray for peace and to demand the release of male prisoners. However, as Lanser writes, nonhegemonic writers may need to find a balance between conservative and subversive rhetorical practices 'in order, paradoxically, to mount an authoritative critique of the authority that the text therefore also perpetuates'.<sup>255</sup> This is apparent in 'Máthair an tSaighdiúra' [The Soldier's Mother], in which a patriotic mother harbours the young anti-treaty IRA man responsible for the death of her own son, a member of the Free State army. This story was criticised in a review by C. Ó. N. [Ciarán Ó Nualláin], for its lack of emotional depth: 'ní mór na dinn-mhothuigheacha atá ar obair a nochtadh ar dhóigh éigin a bhoghas croídhe an léightheora'.<sup>256</sup> However, in this case the mother's stoic composure is strategic. When the soldiers come to her door, she is in fact hiding the young IRA man responsible for her own son's death; she breaks her silence only to protect the young man she is harbouring. The mother's performed public stoicism is undercut at the story's conclusion as her keening echoes through the valley; Ní Ghráda's reference to the practice of keening also speaks to the longstanding ability of the oral Gaelic tradition to express emotions that were suppressed in public life.<sup>257</sup>

The story 'An tOifigeach' [The Officer] more clearly addresses the dangers of the romanticisation of maternal sacrifice. A tellingly unnamed widow diligently harbours her son and his flying column during the war of independence. Ní Ghráda documents the many tasks the mother dutifully fulfils, from soothing the men back to sleep when they are disturbed by nightmares, to waking them up as they make for an ambush in Kilmichael, to preparing them

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<sup>254</sup> 'terrible, unnatural deed', *ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>255</sup> Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, p.7.

<sup>256</sup> 'you must reveal the deep feelings in a way that will move the reader's heart', C. Ó N. 'Leabhar do na Gaedhilgeoirí', *The Irish Independent*, 21 May 1940, p. 4.

<sup>257</sup> Ní Ghráda, *An Bheirt Dearbhráthar*, p. 103.

a breakfast of duck eggs, sliced bread, and tea.<sup>258</sup> After they leave, she washes the dishes, puts turf on the fire, sweeps and cleans the house, and says a rosary for the cause.<sup>259</sup> She masterfully conceals her distress throughout: ‘Níor dhóigh le héinne a bheadh ag éisteacht léi go raibh aon ualach ar a haigne.’<sup>260</sup> After the conflict ends, she travels to the city full of excitement to surprise her son who is now a high-ranking officer in the Free State army. She also needs to seek financial support from him in order to evade eviction. On her arrival at the barracks, however, she is curtly greeted by the young soldiers on guard. When she pushes in the door of her son’s office without knocking, she finds him infatuated by a finely-dressed young lady. The women’s expensive jewellery is juxtaposed to the mother’s dishevelled attire as she wears a ‘hata de’n tsean-dhéanamh a bhí fíorsceochach’.<sup>261</sup> Ashamed of his mother’s appearance, the officer does not greet her. Sensing her son’s shame, the mother turns on her heel and makes the long journey home again. The institutions of the newly-conceived State, from which Ní Ghráda herself was expected to retreat, is a hostile place for the women who ‘sacrificed’ so much for ‘the cause’.

While Macardle often stereotypically pits British/Free State soldiers against brave, chivalrous republicans, Ní Ghráda’s stories contain a multitude of perspectives on the revolutionary period and the complexities of allegiance. The collection explores the plight of a man mistakenly identified as a spy by the nationalist movement, and also documents the psychological plight of another man whose alcohol addiction led him to spy on the IRA and finally take his own life. ‘An tSochraid’ [The Funeral] too offers an intimate psychological portrait, this time from the perspective of an RIC officer from an impoverished family in Armagh who attends the funeral of one of his colleagues. The collection also implies violence against women: in ‘Is Treise Dúthchas ná Oileamhaint’ [Instinct is Stronger Than Upbringing], a returned emigrant businessman defends a young woman who is fleeing from a group of Black and Tans; her unravelled clothing perhaps hints at her sexual vulnerability.<sup>262</sup>

The ironic narrative strategies of the gothic mode are employed by Ní Ghráda to destabilise what is discursively understood as real, as emphasised by her use of metanarrative intrusions and fraudulent narrators. In ‘Cain’, the narrator’s poignant account of heroically shooting his brother to save him from a certain death at the hands of the Black and Tans is

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<sup>258</sup> *ibid*, p. 172. The reference to an ambush at Kilmichael is likely a reference to the much-debated ambush of an Auxiliary patrol by an IRA flying column led by Tom Barry on 28 November 1920.

<sup>259</sup> *ibid*, p. 174.

<sup>260</sup> ‘No one listening to her would have never suspected that there was any burden on her mind’, *ibid*, p. 175.

<sup>261</sup> ‘and old style hat full of brambles’, *ibid*, p. 180.

<sup>262</sup> *ibid*, p. 220.

revealed to be no more than a figment of his whiskey-fuelled imagination.<sup>263</sup> The testimony in ‘Airgead i bhFolach’ is also undermined, as the narrator speculates ‘ná raibh ina chuid cainte ach gliogar’.<sup>264</sup> Ní Ghráda thus casts doubt on the authenticity of narrative itself, and in doing so, troubles the heroic masculine narrative of the struggle for independence.

### **Máirín Cregan’s *Hunger–strike: A Play in Two Acts:* ‘Torture Of Mind’ on the Domestic Battlefield**

While Ní Ghráda’s play *An Triail* (1964) is highly-regarded, she is largely known as a children’s writer to the extent that *An Bheirt Dearbhráthar agus Scéalta Eile* [The Two Brother’s and Other Stories] has not only eluded scholarly attention, it is also miscatalogued as a children’s book.<sup>265</sup> This turn from more political subject matters to children’s fiction is also a feature of Máirín Cregan’s literary career. Cregan was once highly regarded for her children’s books, which include the books *Old John* (1937) and *Rathina* (1944). But, as Susan Cahill claims, ‘she is now an unknown figure; her children’s literature is forgotten, and her significance has not yet been analysed’.<sup>266</sup> According to Cahill, Cregan’s children’s works are strongly connected to the aims of the Fianna Fáil administration and ‘promulgate the agricultural politics of the time, closely tied to strategic constructions of Ireland, which insist upon a rural, self-sufficient nation populated with ‘clear-eyed, happy-hearted children’.<sup>267</sup> Yet Cregan’s earlier works include two highly political plays, *Curlew’s Call* (1940), which deals with female emigration, and *Hunger–strike: A Play in Two Acts* (1933).

*Hunger–strike* perhaps offers the most direct testimony of the psychological implications of civil war for women. The play outlines the emotional breakdown of a young woman, Nano Grady, whose husband Ned is one of some 7,000 republican prisoners to participate in the mass hunger strike of October 1923. The dedication of the play, ‘To Jim, With my Love’, indicates the play’s autobiographical nature given that Cregan’s husband, Wexford Fianna Fáil T. D., Dr. James Ryan, participated in the strike and was reported on his

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<sup>263</sup> *ibid*, p 118.

<sup>264</sup> ‘that his talk was all blather’, *ibid*, p. 126.

<sup>265</sup> See *National Collection of Children’s Books*, <https://nccb.tcd.ie> (Accessed 30 August 2020).

<sup>266</sup> Susan Cahill, ‘Far away from the busy world’: Máirín Cregan’s children’s literature’, in John Countryman, J. and Kelly Matthews (eds), *Country of the young: interpretations of youth and childhood in Irish culture* (Dublin: Four Courts Press: 2013), p. 71.

<sup>267</sup> *ibid*, p. 71.

thirtieth day to be ‘in a precarious condition’.<sup>268</sup> Cregan herself played a highly active role in the revolution. She transported ‘a violin case full of automatics and ammunition’ to Kerry in the lead up to the 1916 Rising.<sup>269</sup> This resulted in her dismissal from her post as a teacher and she later joined Cumann na mBan.<sup>270</sup> After her release, she went ‘on the run’ to Dublin where she worked in the Department of Foreign Affairs up until June 1922, which led her to deliver dispatches to London and Paris.<sup>271</sup> Her statement to the Bureau of Military History concludes with the line: ‘When the Four Courts was attacked I joined up with Irish republican forces and left Foreign Affairs’.<sup>272</sup> While she gives no further details to the Bureau, she ‘acted continuously’ in support of the republican side from June 1922; her duties included carrying dispatches across the city and delivering messages to which included delivering dispatches to Geneva, Berlin, London, Paris and Rome, as outlined in her application for a pension and in an interview with Ernie O’Malley.<sup>273</sup>

In 1945, Cregan sent an account of her revolutionary activities to Oscar Traynor, Minister of Defence. Her account was prefaced with a letter marked by uncertainty:

Is this right? Or should I say more or less? I am taking the liberty of sending it to you. Somehow it looks very ‘bald’. But, not being a work of fiction, I am being careful not to indulge in trimmings – though indeed no fiction could be more thrilling or strange than the facts of those brave days.<sup>274</sup>

The analogy Cregan draws between her revolutionary experience and the genre of fiction perhaps speaks to the fact that fiction provided her a more comfortable medium of expression; this is perhaps evident in her decision to inscribe aspects of her civil war experience into *Hunger-strike*. Although the play is conformist in that its protagonist is not engaged in military activities but rather experiences the events of the civil war at a distance as a housewife, it nevertheless demonstrates a confident authorial agency less evident in Cregan’s non-fictional writings. The ambiguities regarding women’s narrative voice is particularly clear in a third-person account by Cregan of her journey to Tralee in the lead up to the 1916 Rising in

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<sup>268</sup> ‘Dr. Jim Ryan, T.D’, *Éire*, 1 December 1923.

<sup>269</sup> Máirín Ryan, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 416, 28 Iúil 1950 p. 4.

<sup>270</sup> J. G. Ryan, ‘Máirín Cregan’, *Kerry Magazine*, p. 50.

<sup>271</sup> Máirín Ryan, ‘Witness Statement’, p. 16.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> Sworn Evidence Given Before the Referee on 28 November 1940, by Mrs Maureen Ryan, Kindlestown House, Delganey, Co. Wicklow. Ref. No. 52148, p. 3.

<sup>274</sup> Máirín Uí Riain, Letter to Oscar Traynor, 8 October 1945. Military Service Pensions Collection, MSP34REF52148.

which she refers to herself as ‘a young girl’.<sup>275</sup> She often placed herself in the role of mediator rather than documenting her own revolutionary experience, as evident in a ‘thrilling story’ detailing her husband’s 1916 experience, a radio talk on the life of Seán Mac Diarmada, and an ‘incident’ regarding James Connolly.<sup>276</sup> Cregan’s statement to the Bureau of Military History, which was collected by Sinéad Ní Chiosáin, Ní Ghráda’s sister-in-law, gives a detailed factual description of her activities, but interestingly enough, Cregan added a number of appendices, including newspaper cut-outs, to her witness statement, as though she needed to prove the veracity of her account. Cregan was one of just a handful of women interviewed by IRA intellectual Ernie O’Malley. The O’Malley interview, though rich in content, is arguably less formalised than many of his one-on-one interviews with male veterans.<sup>277</sup>

### **‘If It Was Translated From Some Scandinavian Language They Would Find No Fault With It’**

If the ‘imperative need to tell’ is accompanied by the need to find a ‘confirming’ readership, Cregan’s play is a prime example of the difficulties experienced by women in sharing their testimony. *Hunger Strike* was submitted to the Abbey theatre in 1931, but was considered ‘unsuitable’ ‘for various reasons’.<sup>278</sup> Dublin publishers M. H. Gill and Sons offered to publish the play at the author’s expense of £26.5.0.<sup>279</sup> The initial response to its publication was less than positive. The publishers lamented that the play was ‘too true to realities’. As a result, ‘it has fallen desperately flat so far, and the unfortunate hunger strike recently has put the tin hat on it properly’.<sup>280</sup> *The Catholic Standard* even refused to print a review given the ‘theologically debatable’ theme. Perhaps Cregan’s play was too direct; she didn’t hide behind a male pseudonym or adopt ‘safe’ narrative modes like the other female revolutionaries discussed in this chapter. As Francis Carty’s brother, James, advised her, ‘if it was translated from some Scandinavian language they [the Abbey] would find no fault with it’.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Máirín Cregan, ‘The Rush to Meet the Arms-Ship’, *The Irish Press*, 24 April 1933, p. 6.

<sup>276</sup> Máirín Cregan, ‘Carrying the Message in Easter Week: a courier’s thrilling story’, *Irish Press* (Christmas Supplement), 25 December 1934, p. 13 & p. 36; ‘Recruiting in 1914: Seán MacDermott’s Part: Broadcast on Life of Great Patriot’ *The Meath Chronicle*, 18 January 1936, p. 9; Máirín Cregan, ‘James Connolly: an incident’, *The Capuchin Annual*, 1936, p. 226.

<sup>277</sup> Máirín Ryan, interview with Ernie O’Malley. Ernie O’Malley Papers. UCDA p17b/103 [undated].

<sup>278</sup> Letter to Máirín Cregan from Abbey Theatre, Dublin. 12 June. 1931, NLI MS, 50,423/1.

<sup>279</sup> Letter to Mrs. Ryan from Patrick T. Keohane, M. H. Gill, 2 November 1932, NLI MS, 50,423/1.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> Letter to Máirín Cregan from James Carty, 24 July 1933, NLI [National Library of Ireland] MS, 50,423/1.

Set in a rural farmhouse, the play's protagonist, Nano Grady, struggles to keep herself 'from going mad' as she supports her husband Ned's decision to participate in the strike.<sup>282</sup> Though conformist on the surface, Cregan's focus on Nano's emotional distress within seemingly safe borders of her home challenges the male-centred narrative of war. The renowned literary critic, Daniel Corkery, who admitted that 'many parts of it [the play] are quite perfect' recommended to Cregan that she add a third act in which Nano's husband Ned appears on stage 'reconciled and prepared to carry on'.<sup>283</sup> Such advice indicates there was a resistance to Cregan's foregrounding of the female protagonist.

Nevertheless, contemporary reviews focus on the conformist aspects of the play. Eibhlín Nic Ghráinne bizarrely notes in *Dublin Magazine* that Nano's husband's character 'is clearly defined' although, as she adds, 'he does not appear on the stage'.<sup>284</sup> More telling still is a review in *The Catholic Bulletin* which praises the play for 'placing in her proper setting and due prominence the Irish woman, the Irish wife and the Irish mother in the particular phase of the struggle for Irish Freedom'.<sup>285</sup> This further demonstrates Lanser's observations regarding the balancing of conservative and subversive rhetorical practices in women's writings.<sup>286</sup>

### Public Stoicism vs Private Suffering

In opening scenes, Nano embodies the values of stoicism and composure popularly associated with republican woman as she supports her husband Ned on his hunger strike, hoping 'he'll be let die in peace'.<sup>287</sup> As the play progresses, however, the conflict between Nano's public stoicism and private suffering becomes apparent. While maintaining her composure in front of family and domestic helpers, Nano lets down her cover in the presence of her old Fenian neighbour, Davy Lucey, and struggles to articulate her doubts about the futility of the strike: 'I don't know if -- if I want Ned to hold out --- if ---'.<sup>288</sup> These unspoken emotions emerge at night-time: 'I thought I'd go mad. I'd be all right if I hadn't to go to bed at night.' Nano cannot sleep and is overwhelmed by the guilt she feels for driving others to 'lend a hand and fight':

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<sup>282</sup> Máirín Cregan, *Hunger-Strike: A Play in Two Acts* (M.H. Gill, 1932), p. 23.

<sup>283</sup> Letter to Máirín Cregan from D. Ó Corcora. 15 April 1934, NLI MS, 50,423/1.

<sup>284</sup> É Nic. G[hráinne], 'Review of *Hunger-Strike, A Play in Two Acts*, by Máirín Cregan', *Dublin Magazine*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, April-June, 1933, p. 87.

<sup>285</sup> 'Review of Hunger Strike', *The Catholic Bulletin*, March 1933.

<sup>286</sup> Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*.

<sup>287</sup> Cregan, *Hunger-Strike* p. 3.

<sup>288</sup> *ibid*, p. 26.

Last night I dreamt (*She looks fixedly at something before her*) – I dreamt I saw Ned lying on an old torn mattress on the floor of a stable and that I had my two hands on his throat, choking him. I could see my face getting purple and eyes bulging, and he kept crying to me, ‘What are you killing me for? What are you killing me for?’ and I kept laughing and saying, ‘For fun.’<sup>289</sup>

Nano’s nightmare complicates standard representations of patriotic Irish women as passive victims. Indeed, her nightmarish representation of herself tallies with contemporary depictions of female republicans who relished at the very thought of death. Pro-treatyite writer P. S. O’Hegarty claimed that the women of Sinn Féin were ‘practically unsexed, their mother’s milk blackened to make gunpowder, their minds working on nothing save hate and blood’.<sup>290</sup> Nano’s confused sense of guilt is compounded by the juxtaposition of her disturbing night terrors with the more benevolent dream of her young son who ‘was dreaming daddy came home and I thought that’s what you were laughing about’.<sup>291</sup> The divisions between Nano’s public stoicism, her private suffering and her nightmarish ‘evil self’ further exemplify the trope of the split personality that often emerges as a means to indicate psychological injury, as in *Noreen*. According to Olga Glebova, the split personality trope is often employed in women’s writings, as it facilitates the exploration of ‘the traumatic effects of social constriction, exclusion, and dispossession on women living in a patriarchal culture’.<sup>292</sup>

The divisions of the civil war are played out within the domestic setting through the clashes between Nano and fur-clothed aunt Julia, who exerts enormous pressure on her to convince her husband to come off the strike. Julia even suggests that her husband, in his derangement, may wonder if she has her eye on another man.<sup>293</sup> As Nano notes in an aside, ‘Nobody in the world can ever be half as cruel to you as your own relations’.<sup>294</sup> Nano’s distress has a physical impact and, like her husband on hunger strike, she too grows emaciated in her worry, becoming ‘paler and thinner, her face expressionless’.<sup>295</sup> Like the ghostly presences in

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<sup>289</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>290</sup> O’Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin*, p. 102.

<sup>291</sup> Cregan, *Hunger-Strike*, p. 23.

<sup>292</sup> Olga Glebova, ‘Trauma, Female Identity and the Trope of Splitting in Lessing, Figes, Tennant and Weldon’, in Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Pellicer-Ortín (eds), *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), p. 59.

<sup>293</sup> Cregan, *Hunger-Strike*, p. 25.

<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>295</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

Macardle's and Ní Ghráda's fictions, Nano is reduced to a phantasm and walks up the stairs 'like a ghost'.<sup>296</sup>

Cregan makes subtle reference to women's activism throughout: Nano wishes to escape from her domestic base and her family disparage her Cumann na mBan activism.<sup>297</sup> Davy also calls attention to oft-forgotten female strikers commenting that some of them were 'only slips of girls'.<sup>298</sup> This is more pertinent given that Nell Ryan, Cregan's sister-in-law, survived a thirty-four-day strike in April 1923.<sup>299</sup> In addition, the domestic divisions in the play undoubtedly resonated with readers in light of the fact that the Ryan family, who were at the centre of a Dublin 'network of radicals' famously split over the treaty.<sup>300</sup> Min Ryan was married to Free State Minister for Defence, Richard Mulcahy, who oversaw the internment of a number of the Ryan siblings. Kit Ryan even urged her sister to leave her husband, suggesting the clashes in the play between Nano and aunt Julia may be more sanitised than the actual situation of her family in the aftermath of the revolution.<sup>301</sup>

The play concludes with the announcement that Ned has discontinued the hunger strike. While on the one hand Nano laments 'we're beaten again', there is arguably a sense that the certainty of death would bring as much relief as the unknowability of survival. Just before the curtain closes, Nano privately reads out a telegram from Ned: 'All men off strike. *Suspend — your — judgement — for the — present.* Writing to-night. — Ned' [my emphasis].<sup>302</sup> The fact that Ned assumes Nano would be disappointed by his failure to become a martyr arguably hints at the gulf between Nano and her husband. While the published play opens with a dedication to Cregan's husband Jim, the dialogue concludes with the Nano calling the name of her neighbour, who proves a more comforting figure than the absent hungerstriker:

*(She puts her hand to her head.)* I wish my head would stop buzzing. *(She takes a few steps in front of table and suddenly clutches it.)* I think I must be getting weak. *(She*

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<sup>296</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>297</sup> *ibid.*, p. 26, p. 18.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>299</sup> 'Women on Hunger-Strike', *Freeman's Journal*, 21 April 1923, p. 7.

<sup>300</sup> Mary McAuliffe, 'An Idea Has Gone Abroad that All the Women Were Against the Treaty': Cumann na Saoirse and Pro-treaty Women, 1922–3', in Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh, and Liam Weeks (eds), *Debating and Establishing the Irish State* (Irish Academic Press 2018), p. 164; Aidan Seery and Karin Bacon, 'Auto/Biographical Research and the Family', in Julie M. Parsons and Anne Chappell (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Auto/Biography*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), pp 143–56.

<sup>301</sup> Patrick Maume, Ryan, Mary Kate ('Kit', 'Cáit'). *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 2015.

<sup>302</sup> Cregan, *Hunger-Strike*, p. 48.

*sways and makes as if to lie on table. Raising her voice): Davy! Da-a-a-avy. (She swoons.)*<sup>303</sup>

There is no sense of respite for Nano. Davy symbolically tells her that the struggle will continue, as ‘though the cow is dead itself, she has left after her the finest red heifer calf we had yet’.<sup>304</sup> Nano’s individual suffering risks being consumed by the continued public struggle of anti-treaty republicans within the newly-founded State. The play thus speaks to the psychological complexities which characterised women’s experience during the revolutionary period and the necessity of concealing emotional distress in public. While Mary McWhorter recalls meeting Cregan in 1922 and claimed that she had ‘the happy faculty of making fun out of tragedy’,<sup>305</sup> messages smuggled out from the Battle of the Four Courts from her husband Jim resonate with the emotional turmoil evoked by the fictional husband’s telegram. In one note, written as the Four Courts were under siege, Jim reassured her, ‘Don’t mind the big guns, they are harmless to us’.<sup>306</sup>

### **‘[It] gave me a Tremendous Thrill’: A Confirming Audience**

*Hunger-strike*’s only national performance was on Radio Athlone in May 1936.<sup>307</sup> Tomás Ó Maoláin, who himself participated in that forty-one day fast in Mountjoy in 1923, was particularly affected by the play, further illustrating how such testimonies resonated with those who had similar experience. Writing to the author, Ó Maoláin contended that:

the dramatic atmosphere which you were so successful in creating was true to life and gave me a tremendous thrill. My father, who listened in with me and who went through all the torture of mind so well portrayed by Nano, was very much affected by the realism of the production.<sup>308</sup>

There were other attempts to stage the play. In fact, May Manning – who decried the erasure from the official historical narrative of the ‘quiet people who went on living and eating

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<sup>303</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>304</sup> *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>305</sup> ‘I often thought then that she spent most of her waking thoughts with the fairies’. Mary McWhorter, 20 June 1936, untitled newspaper extract. MS, 50,423/1.

<sup>306</sup> UCD Archive, James Ryan papers, P88/72.2.

<sup>307</sup> ‘Radio Programmes’, *The Irish Press*, 5 May 1936, p. 5.

<sup>308</sup> Letter from Tomás Ó Maoileoin to Radio Athlone, 6 May 1936. NLI, MS 50,423/1.

and laughing and sleeping or trying to sleep’ – expressed an interest in producing Cregan’s play in 1933 with a group of players associated with the Irish Women Workers’ Union.<sup>309</sup> However, there is no indication that it was ever produced. Just a year later, Manning emigrated to Boston where she remained for the rest of her life. It could be, therefore, that the high rates of emigration that characterised Ireland in the 1920s and 1930s – particularly the high levels of female emigration – furthered occluded the experiences of female revolutionaries from commemorative practice.<sup>310</sup>

## Conclusion

Margaret Buckley’s 1938 prison diary was the first, and only, full-length published female-authored civil war jail journal. However, by the time Buckley’s memoir was published, female authors had already daringly documented their civil war experience in testimonial fiction that contributed to a counter memory to the official ‘forgetting’ of the civil war. Despite challenges in production and publishing, these fictionalised accounts could not only attract a wider readership, they also offered more narrative freedom than first-person accounts. Fiction, though often a constraining genre for women given the widespread stereotyping of female revolutionaries, nevertheless allowed women to take ownership of wartime trauma and illustrate both how women engaged directly with military activity and how war invaded domestic life. Publicly sharing private stories through testimony was also understood as a means through which to exorcise harmful memories.

Nevertheless, female authors’ access to language was constantly a problem. They thus felt a stronger need than male authors to hide behind protective narrative masks, as evident in the use of male pseudonyms, male-authorising masks, the careful balancing of conformist and subversive rhetorical practice, the retreat to the modes of the gothic and the romance, and the exploitation of the Irish language. While some of these authors have been recuperated by feminist scholars, this chapter highlights the need to afford similar attention to authors, such as

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<sup>309</sup> Letter from Mary Manning to Máirín Cregan, 21 February 1933, NLI, MS 50,423/1.

<sup>310</sup> This is an area I am particularly interested in and which I have explored elsewhere: “‘Sinn Féin Permits ... in the Heels of Their Shoes’: Cumann na mBan Emigrants and Transatlantic Revolutionary Exchange’. *Irish Historical Studies* 44, no. 165 (May 2020), pp 106–30; “Sick on the Irish Sea, Dancing across the Atlantic’: (Anti)-nostalgia in Women’s Diasporic Remembrance of the Irish Revolution’, in Oona Frawley (ed), *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana University Press, 2021), pp 88–106.

Smithson and Cregan, whose writings are less easily reconciled with a feminist agenda. The testimonies considered all complicate conventional understandings of wartime trauma as associated with singular, sudden, catastrophic blows and illustrate the everyday social traumas omitted from heroic commemorations of the revolution. They reclaim the psychological complexities of women's responses to war and thwart simplistic constructions of women as passive victims by drawing attention to women's regulation of other women's behaviour (Smithson) and by conjuring up images of female perpetration (Cregan). Moreover, women's testimonies reflect developing medical discourse regarding psychic trauma and hint at the ways in which the medicalisation of women's 'nervous conditions' could be employed to further suppress female expression and perpetuate patriarchal oppression. As in the previous chapter, these testimonies do not suggest a straightforward connection between the narrativisation of traumatic events and personal healing; unlike Peadar O'Donnell, Francis Carty and Patrick Mulloy who narratively revisited their revolutionary experience throughout their lives, these female authors largely moved away from political subjects during their writing careers. While there is a stark difference between Mulloy's grisly realist novel and the more redemptive narratives of stridently anti-treaty writers, there is less difference between Ní Ghráda's fiction and that of her anti-treaty counterparts, suggesting thus that the question of gender could transcend civil war allegiances.

Despite the creative deployment of self-protective narrative strategies by female authors to point to the emotional toll of civil war, there were, nevertheless, certain aspects of revolutionary experience that were more contentious and difficult to address. The following chapter will consider one such aspect, namely testimonies of gender-based and sexual violence.

## CHAPTER FOUR: TEXTUALISING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The testimonies in the previous chapters illustrate the creative narrative strategies employed by veterans of the civil war to surreptitiously insert private, often painful, personal stories into public remembrance, in spite of reticence at an official level. While these accounts illustrate the ‘imperative to tell’ which is often shared by those who have experienced traumatic events, all such testimonies are the product of the simultaneous need to both disclose and to conceal. While Dori Laub contends that ‘one has to know one’s buried truth in order to be able to live one’s life’, the taboos surrounding sexual trauma in 1920s Ireland complicate such disclosure. As Lindsey Earner-Byrne astutely outlines in her microstudy of sexual violence in the civil war, the reporting of rape was hindered, firstly by ‘the fear of not being believed’, and secondly by ‘the contemporary conviction that a woman was contaminated by rape’.<sup>1</sup> The foundation of the Irish Free State was accompanied by the reification of (hetero)normative gender norms and the promotion of strict moral codes according to which sexual contact outside of marriage was regarded as immoral and even punishable. The stress on patriarchal gender and sexual norms in post-independence Ireland is arguably reflected in the reluctance to address psychological trauma among veterans of the revolution, as explored in previous chapters. ‘Nervous’ male veterans were considered to have failed in their masculinity, while the mental illness of female revolutionaries could be concealed by branding them as ‘unmanageable’ Amazonians whose social transgression was indicative of some sort of psychosexual disorder.

The issue of sexual trauma during the revolution and civil war has galvanised a vibrant body of scholarship in recent years; this includes the work of Earner-Byrne, Sarah Benton, Louise Ryan, Ann Matthews, Gabrielle Machnik-Kekes, Marie Coleman, Justin Dolan Stover,

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<sup>1</sup> Lindsey Earner-Byrne, ‘The Rape of Mary M.: A Microhistory of Sexual Violence and Moral Redemption in 1920s Ireland’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 24, no. 1 (January 2015), p. 87.

Linda Connolly, Gemma Clark, Susan Byrne, Mary McAuliffe and others.<sup>2</sup> However, the extent of rape and sexual violence during the conflict remains a moot point. For Coleman and Clark (systematic) sexual violence was ‘rare’ and ‘relative[ly] [scarce]’ in comparison to other twentieth-century conflicts across Europe.<sup>3</sup> Connolly, on the other hand, argues that sexual violence against women is a ‘dormant and hidden’ history and calls for further understanding of this ‘forgotten war crime’.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter does not seek to grapple with the complexities of quantifying sexual violence as either ‘rare’, ‘limited’, ‘widespread’ or ‘relatively scarce’. Rather, it aims to complicate the belief that sexual violence ‘disappeared from public discourse for decades after the Civil War’ and therefore must be ‘discovered’ and ‘recovered’ from ‘newly available online records’ and ‘emerging stories and evidence [...] in archival sources’.<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on uncovering ‘new evidence’ arguably offers a further example of what Beiner outlines as ‘the popular appeal of quasi-psychoanalytical models in which a traumatic event is considered, by definition, to be unspeakable until it resurfaces at a much later date’.<sup>6</sup> By focusing on textual representations of sexualised violence in narratives by veterans of the conflict, this chapter first considers the challenges to testifying to sexual violence first hand and highlights a number of self-protective narrative strategies evident in veteran narratives. Secondly, this chapter addresses representations of sexual transgression and violation in literary sources written by veterans themselves. Despite the prevailing emphasis on the ‘Catholic culture of self-

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<sup>2</sup> Sarah Benton, ‘Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913–23’, *Feminist Review*, no. 50 (1995), pp 148–172. Louise Ryan, ‘“Drunken Tans”: Representations of Sex and Violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919–21)’, *Feminist Review*, no. 66 (2000), pp 73–94; Ann Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900–1922* (Mercier Press Ltd, 2010); Ann Matthews, *Dissidents: Irish Republican Women, 1923–1941* (Cork: Mercier, 2012); Marie Coleman, ‘Violence against Women in the Irish War of Independence, 1919–1921’, in Diarmaid Ferriter and Susannah Riordan (eds), *Years of Turbulence: The Irish Revolution and Its Aftermath* (UCD Press, 2015), pp 137–56; Gabrielle Machnik-Kekesi, ‘Gendering Bodies: Violence as Performance in Ireland’s War of Independence (1919–1921)’, (Concordia University: Unpublished Thesis 2017); Justin Dolan Stover, ‘Families, Vulnerability and Sexual Violence During the Irish Revolution’, in *Perceptions of Pregnancy from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*, in Jennifer Evans and Ciara Meehan (eds), *Genders and Sexualities in History* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp 57–75; Linda Connolly, ‘Towards a Further Understanding of the Violence Experienced by Women in the Irish revolution’, *Maynooth University Social Sciences Institute, Working Paper Series*, no.7 (Maynooth University, January, 2019); Linda Connolly, ‘Sexual Violence in the Irish Civil War: A Forgotten War Crime?’, *Women’s History Review*, 6 March 2020, pp 1–18; Susan Byrne, ‘“Keeping Company with the Enemy”: Gender and Sexual Violence against Women during the Irish War of Independence and Civil War, 1919–1923’, *Women’s History Review* 2 March 2020, pp 1–18; Gemma Clark, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); Gemma Clark, ‘Violence against Women in the Irish Civil War, 1922–3: Gender-Based Harm in Global Perspective’, *Irish Historical Studies* 44, no. 165 (May 2020), pp 75–90.

<sup>3</sup> Coleman, ‘Violence against Women in the Irish War of Independence’, p. 154; Clark, ‘Violence against Women’, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Connolly, ‘Sexual Violence in the Irish Civil War’, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4; Connolly, ‘Towards a Further Understanding’, p. 2; p. 32; p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Guy Beiner, ‘Memory Too Has a History’, *Dublin Review of Books*, 1 March 2015. Available at: <https://www.dr.b.ie/essays/memory-too-has-a-history> (Accessed 9 February 2020).

abnegation' which accompanied the foundation of the Irish Free State,<sup>7</sup> cultural representations of the conflict do not shy away from questions of sexuality and sexual violence. These include implicit and explicit representations of hair shearing, domestic violence, strip-searching, sexual humiliation, gender-specific torture, and rape. While many of these accounts are male authored and document violence against women, autofictional narratives also point to the sexualised humiliation of men and resultant psychological trauma. It emerges, thus, that the supposedly hidden crime of sexual violence proliferated in literary narratives in the early decades of the state.

I argue that the study of such cultural narratives is as necessary as any archival study of pension applications, compensation claims, or court proceedings – particularly in the context of sexual violence. As Shani D'Cruze outlines, the 'historical study of this topic (perhaps more than most others) is necessarily a discourse on and around the surviving evidences, not an unmediated description of 'what happened'.<sup>8</sup> While careful to distinguish representations of sexual violence from actual occurrences, the prevalence of sexual violence in popular forms of revolutionary remembrance nevertheless raises questions regarding the connections between cultural representations of sexual violations and the social reality. As Sabine Sielke argues in her historical study of the rhetoric of rape, 'cultural literacy' determines 'the signifying power of real rape'.<sup>9</sup> Jody Freeman similarly claims that both legal and literary representations of rape 'draw on and produce images that are already prevalent; they are part of what might be called the existing representational economy'.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike the two previous chapters which highlight the strength of the self-representational impulse, few of the texts in this chapter detail sexual violence first-hand; rather, testimonial or autofictional narratives of sexual trauma – whether female or male-authored – tend to 'bear witness' to the 'pain of others'. This ventriloquism raises a host of complex questions regarding the ethics of 'telling' and 'reading' sexual violence. The blurred

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<sup>7</sup> Tom Inglis, 'Origins and Legacies of Irish Prudery: Sexuality and Social Control in Modern Ireland', *Éire-Ireland*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Shani D'Cruze, 'Approaching the History of Rape and Sexual Violence: Notes towards Research', *Women's History Review* 1, no. 3 (September 1992), p. 379. Cited in Connolly, 'Towards a Further Understanding of the Violence Experienced by Women in the Irish Revolution', p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Sabine Sielke, *Reading Rape: The Rhetoric of Sexual Violence in American Literature and Culture, 1790–1990* (Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Jody Freeman, 'The Disciplinary Function of Rape's Representation: Lessons from the Kennedy Smith and Tyson Trials', *Law & Social Inquiry* 18, no. 3 (1993), p. 520. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver's study of literary representations of sexual violence also concludes that 'the politics and aesthetics of rape are one'; while Sarah Projansky, in considering sexual violence on the screen, asserts that 'rape discourse is *part of* the fabric of what rape is'. Lynn A. Higgins, *Rape and Representation* (Columbia University Press, 1993). p. 1; Sarah Projansky, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (NYU Press, 2001), p. 2.

boundaries between the real and the imagined, testifying and eroticizing, reading and engaging in voyeurism, are highly problematic. Furthermore, this chapter considers the possibility that narrative, as much as it may open debate and aid abreaction of trauma, can also perpetuate a culture of sexual violence and, through graphic representation, even textually enact a sort of second violation.

### Women's Testimonies of Sexual Violence

The lack of first-hand accounts of sexual violence during the revolution does not mean that such attacks did not occur. There are many reasons why victims of sexual violence may have preferred to keep this aspect of their story 'buried'. The damage that sexual relations outside marriage caused to a woman's reputation is inferred in the memoirs of Free State officer and Liverpool native John Pinkman. Pinkman quickly silenced a young female revolutionary who was courting an IRA man by threatening to 'tell everyone downstairs that you've had a fellow in bed with you'.<sup>11</sup> Regardless of whether the relations were consensual or not, women could be held responsible for men's sexual behaviour. Cumann na mBan activist Kathleen Behan (née Kearney), for example, refers in her memoir to the 'man who'd tried to rape me'. When she told her mother-in-law of this assault, she was told that she 'must have encouraged him'.<sup>12</sup> Women's testimonies of sexual violence thus require careful reading and are often shrouded by silence and euphemism. The ambiguous language employed – women are 'roughly handled', 'taken away' or 'outraged' – often poses more questions about the nature of women's treatment than they answer.

The tendency to view women as 'tainted witnesses' – as evident in Behan's account and as explored in Chapter Three – is not only apparent in contemporary responses. It is also reflected in more recent scholarship. In an article from 2000, Louise Ryan draws attention to a number of highly explicit first-hand testimonies of sexual assault that were published in the republican gazette, *The Irish Bulletin*, in 1921. These include Mary Kelly's account of being assaulted by Crown forces during a raid on her family home in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford; Nellie O'Mahony's testimony of being sexually assaulted in her home at Knockduff, Dunmanway, Co. Cork; and Norah Healy's report of being raped, when heavily pregnant, in

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<sup>11</sup> John A. Pinkman, *In the Legion of the Vanguard* (Mercier Press, 1998), p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> Kathleen Behan, *Mother of All the Behans: The Story of Kathleen Behan as Told to Brian Behan* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 52.

her home on 106 Griffin St., Blackrock, Cork.<sup>13</sup> Rather than unpack these graphic testimonies and tease out the context of their production, historians have questioned their reliability and significance, suggesting that ‘the veracity of these reports is difficult to judge given the propaganda nature of *The Irish Bulletin* and lack of any other evidence’, or that Ryan’s ‘supposedly ‘convincing evidence’ of widespread attacks and sexual violence [...] is actually based on only a handful of examples’.<sup>14</sup> However, both Healy’s and O’Mahony’s testimonies can be cross-referenced. Mrs. Healy’s original hand-written affidavit still exists.<sup>15</sup> Handwritten testimonies of Nellie O’Mahony also survive, while census records corroborate her given address, as well as the names of her mother, father, and brothers, Peter and William, which were included in her published account.<sup>16</sup>

Healy’s, O’Mahony’s and Kelly’s testimonies were published during the war of independence. However, sexual violence during the civil war may have further hindered reporting. As Earner-Byrne highlights:

The story of an Irish woman raped during the War of Independence by a British soldier, particularly one of the hated Black and Tans, lent itself more readily to the accepted national telling of that war—the bad British army against the good Irish people. In contrast, the stories of Irish women being raped by Irish men who had claimed Republican credentials were far more difficult to absorb into the already fraught cultural framing of the Civil War.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Both O’Mahony’s and Healy’s accounts were published on 14 April 1921. Séamus Fitzgerald from Cobh, a TD in the first Dáil, also makes reference in his witness statement to the rape of ‘an already middle-aged pregnant woman [...] in Blackpool by Black and Tans.’ Fitzgerald, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 1737, 24 June 1958, p. 30. See also Connolly, *Towards a Further Understanding*, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Marie Coleman, *The Irish Revolution, 1916-1923* (Routledge, 2013), p. 93; Clark, *Everyday Violence*, p. 192. Dolan Stover cautions that ‘records of sexual violence, such as rape, remain somewhat elusive and unreliable’. ‘Families, Vulnerability and Sexual Violence during the Irish Revolution’, p. 66.

<sup>15</sup> Alfred O’Rahilly Papers, University College Cork, Boole Library. My thanks to Ciara Hyland for sharing this information.

<sup>16</sup> Census return for 1911, available at: <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>. A statement from Nellie dated the 25 January 1921, which is thought to have been sent to by the First Southern Division IRA to IRA GHQ in Dublin, suggests more severe mistreatment than the published testimony. In the published statement, Nellie recounts that an armed Auxiliary Cadet raised her night-dress ‘above my waist and kept it in that position for several minutes. All this time he was going through the actions of searching me, putting his hand under the blouse and all round my body’. However, in the second, unpublished statement, Nellie claims the cadet ‘forced’ her to take off my nightdress and ‘kept me *naked* about 10 minutes while searching me’ (my emphasis). ‘Outrages on Irish Women’, *Irish Bulletin*, 14 April 1921. ‘Letter from 1st Southern Division IRA to General Headquarters IRA Society of Irish Revolutionary History and Militaria’, Society of Irish Revolutionary History and Militaria, 12 April 2019. Available at: <https://sirhm.com/2019/04/12/letter-from-1st-southern-division-ira-to-general-headquarters-ira/> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Earner-Byrne, ‘The Rape of Mary M’, p. 86.

Internationally, civil wars have often been considered ‘low-rape’ wars, perhaps due to the fact that the rhetoric of rape has been historically characterised by the ‘specter of the rapist ‘other’’.<sup>18</sup> Until 2008, historians widely accepted that the American Civil war was a ‘low rape war’.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, sexual violence committed by Jewish men against Jewish women during the Holocaust is highly contentious,<sup>20</sup> while sexual violence committed during the Spanish Civil War remains marginalised.<sup>21</sup>

Aside from potential shaming, questions of credibility, and the taboo of civil war sexual assault, female revolutionaries may have also chosen not to report sexual violence as part of a refusal to take the position of victim. In her study of the testimony of female republicans in the Spanish Civil War, Gina Herrmann outlines that female republicans seldom testify to sexual violence or rape in their testimonies, yet refer to the sexual violation of others. Such ventriloquism is evident in Kathleen Clarke’s memoir in which she recounts that a British soldier sat down beside an unnamed Cumann na mBan woman, ‘flung his arms around her and attempted to kiss her’.<sup>22</sup> Clarke’s interest, however, is not in the soldier’s actions, but in the girl’s valiant response: ‘She boxed him thoroughly, resumed her seat and continued reading [...] she was a girl anyone would be proud of.’<sup>23</sup>

Laura McAtackey’s study of the graffiti and autograph books of female republican prisoners in Kilmainham Jail also highlights the inmates’ tendency to celebrate their resistance against night-time raids on their cells. For example, Brigid Reed’s autograph book includes the note: ‘don’t forget Bridie when the soldier raided our dormitorys [sic] at 3 in the morning when we were asleep, when when [sic] they came the next night they got a let down, for we had our doors barricaded [sic] and when they tried to force them in but failed’.<sup>24</sup> This celebration of resistance may have been a conscious strategy to maintain focus on the political message of female revolutionaries’ self-representation. As Hermann contends, testimonies of activists ‘ask the audience to be attuned to the power of the Republican ideal, not to the power of the regime

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<sup>18</sup> Dara Kay Cohen, *Rape during Civil War* (Cornell University Press, 2016); Sielke, *Reading Rape*, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> See Kim Murphy, *I Had Rather Die: Rape in the Civil War* (Coachlight Press, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> See Sonja Maria Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel, *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* (University Press of New England, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> See Maud Joly, ‘Las Violencias Sexuadas De La Guerra Civil Española: Paradigma Para Una Lectura Cultural Del Conflicto’, *Historia Social*, no. 61 (2008), pp 89–107.

<sup>22</sup> Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman: Kathleen Clarke, 1878–1972: An Autobiography* (O’Brien Press, 1991), p. 90.

<sup>23</sup> Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 90. See also Kristine A. Byron, *Women, Revolution, and Autobiographical Writing in the Twentieth Century: Writing History, Writing the Self* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Laura McAtackey, ‘Gender, Incarceration and Power Relations during the Irish Civil War (1922–1923)’, in Victoria Sanford, Katerina Stefatos and Cecilia M. Salvi (eds), *Gender Violence in Peace and War: States of Complicity* (Rutgers University Press, 2016), p. 56.

that employed violence'. In writing their life stories, Spanish republican women thus aim to rescue 'their publicly celebrated militancy from the strain of rape and sexual torture'.<sup>25</sup>

In this context, Herrmann points to frequent denials of sexual abuse in testimonies of female revolutionaries of the Spanish Civil War, such as the *guerrillera* Esperanza Martínez who insisted she was not raped: 'tengo que decir que no me violaron'.<sup>26</sup> Similar minimising of sexual contact emerges in the Irish context. Peg Broderick, of Galway, in a rare account of having her hair shaved, outlines that 'they took me out and closed the door, then grabbed my hair, saying 'What wonderful curls you've got' and then proceeded to cut off all my hair to the scalp with very blunt scissors'.<sup>27</sup> However, she includes the disclaimer that: 'I might say that *they did not handle me too roughly*, which is strange to say' (my emphasis).<sup>28</sup> It is hard to imagine how such treatment could not be 'rough'; was Broderick's disclaimer a safeguard for her 'publicly celebrated militancy'?<sup>29</sup>

### The Donegal Amazon: Eithne Coyle's Revised Testimony

Eithne Coyle (to whom Macardle dedicated the story 'The Prisoner') underscores that during her arrest by British forces in December 1920, despite the verbal abuse she received, 'physically I was not in any way illtreated'.<sup>30</sup> This disclaimer raises the question as to the need for its inclusion. A native of Co. Donegal, Coyle was one of the most active female revolutionaries during the revolution. Her strong militancy led to the questioning of both her gender and sexual conformity. She was regarded as having done 'a man's work' and was also referred to in contemporary newspapers as the 'Donegal Amazon'<sup>31</sup>; this designation was sexual in its evocation of mythical Amazonian warriors who 'cut off their right breasts so that

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<sup>25</sup> Gina Herrmann, 'They Didn't Rape Me: Traces of Gendered Violence and Sexual Injury in the Testimonies of Spanish Republican Women Survivors of the Franco Dictatorship', in Nanci Adler and Selma Leydesdorff (eds), *Tapestry of Memory: Evidence and Testimony in Life-Story Narrative* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2013), p. 93.

<sup>26</sup> Herrmann, 'They Didn't Rape Me', p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> Peg Broderick-Nicholson, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 1682, 27 September, 1957, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Herrmann, 'They Didn't Rape Me', p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> Eithne Coyle, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 750, 10 Mí na Samhna 1952, p. 5. See also Eithne Coyle, 'Reminiscences of Eithne O'Donnell (née Coyle)', 12 July 1972, [Unpublished memoir] Kilmainham Gaol Archive, 20MS-1B33-19.

<sup>31</sup> Coyle, 'Witness Statement', p. 20; 'Donegal Amazon's Exploit', *Freemans Journal*, 27 April 1922, p. 2.

they could better use bows and arrows'.<sup>32</sup> There are a number of variations between Coyle's statement to the Bureau of Military History, gathered by Sinéad Ní Chiosáin in 1952, and her second memoir, dated 1972, which has stronger undertones of sexual misconduct. This hints at the possibility of censoring by officials of the Bureau, and also at the possibility that Coyle may have rewritten her narrative in 1972 in light of second wave feminism (at one point in her later memoir, she adds the exclamation, 'Women's Lib, Take Note!').<sup>33</sup>

The second narrative documents that Coyle was presented with a gun by the IRA when ambushed by the Free State army on her return from Arranmore Island. Intriguingly, this reference to the gun is not included in the account of the ambush in the 1952 statement. Furthermore, the second narrative hints at the possible sexualised nature of her mistreatment when interned during the civil war. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Margaret Buckley felt that Coyle was subject to 'unchristian conditions' during her civil war imprisonment. Coyle describes this term of imprisonment in her 1952 statement as follows:

The soldiers used to come into the guardroom beside my door and I had my heart in my mouth for fear they would break into my cell which was locked from the outside [...] I made a protest to the O/C. – McGowan – and he replied that I had been doing a man's work and that I should put up with any treatment that would be given to a man in my position. At last I went on hunger-strike and remained on hunger-strike until I was brought to Buncrana military barracks. There was a woman attendant there and I did not take food until I got a guarantee that I would get proper treatment.<sup>34</sup>

In the second narrative the emphasis is placed not on 'proper treatment' but on 'protection'. Coyle recalls that 'Pay night in that place is something that I can never forget.' She once again recalls her unsuccessful appeal to the O/C and continues to note that 'I was on hunger strike from that moment until I was released or transferred to some *civilized* place, where I would have the *protection* of a female attendant' (my emphasis).<sup>35</sup> There are also subtle differences between Coyle's descriptions of her imprisonment in Athlone Military Barracks in early 1921. In the 1952 statement, Coyle outlines that there was a 'pretty big opening in the

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<sup>32</sup> Letter to pension board from Frank Simons, 26 November 1945, Eithne O'Donnell, MSP34REF60256. Lucy Noakes, "'A Disgrace to the Country They Belong to': The Sexualisation of Female Soldiers in First World War Britain', *Revue LISA/LISA e-Journal*, no. Vol. VI – n°4 (1 September 2008) [Online].

<sup>33</sup> Coyle, 'Manuscript; Reminiscences', p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Eithne Coyle, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 750, 10 Mí na Samhna 1952, p. 20.

<sup>35</sup> Coyle, 'Manuscript; Reminiscences', p. 18.

wall beside the door'.<sup>36</sup> She notes: 'I tried to keep it covered with papers, but every time I did that the sentry outside stuck his rifle through the opening, so that I was not able to undress'.<sup>37</sup> In the 1972 narrative the 'big opening' becomes a 'glory hole', thus making a stronger suggestion of the voyeurism: 'I was unable to undress while I was there. I filled up the glory hole with newspaper and my faithful guardian outside pushed them into my cell with his rifle'.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Coyle delights in the fact that she was moved downstairs in the Barracks after a few days, and no longer had to 'contend with a peeping Tommie for the rest of the night'.<sup>39</sup> This language of the 'peeping Tommie' is not included in the 1952 witness statement. The changes between Coyle's 1952 witness statement and her 1972 memoir suggest that she may have self-censored in her early account, or that the Bureau investigators were reluctant to dwell on gender-based mistreatment. The subtle divergences between these two accounts point both to the minimising of female militancy (Coyle's possession of the gun) and of the possible sexualised nature of their treatment (the need for 'protection', the 'glory hole', and the 'peeping Tommie').

### Men's Autobiography vs Men's Fiction

Men's autobiographies can be equally unforthcoming in relation to matters of sex, never mind sexual violence. Louise Ryan contends that in their memoirs and autobiographies, IRA men 'constructed themselves as chivalrous, clean, sober, well-disciplined and pious' and made no 'mention of sexual encounters with women'.<sup>40</sup> According to Diarmaid Ferriter:

any search for sex in the memoirs and biographies written by Irish republicans of this era will be in vain. The same is true of the Bureau of Military History. What the reader gets, instead, is a depiction of chivalrous masculinity, brotherhood and camaraderie [...].<sup>41</sup>

C. S. Andrews famously claimed in a much-cited letter to Seán O'Faoláin in 1965 that 'the absence of sexual relations between the men and women of the republican movement was

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<sup>36</sup> Coyle, 'Witness Statement', p. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Coyle, 'Witness Statement', p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Coyle, 'Manuscript; Reminiscences', p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Louise Ryan, 'In the line of fire': Representations of Women and War (1919– 1923) through the Writings of Republican Men', in Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (eds), *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags* (Irish Academic Press, 2004), p. 52.

<sup>41</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland* (Profile Books, 2010), p. 95.

one of its most peculiar features. I suppose all revolutionaries are basically Puritanical, otherwise they wouldn't be revolutionaries'.<sup>42</sup>

However, despite the belief that 'Irish prudery kept a veil over issues of sex and sexuality until recent decades'<sup>43</sup>, literary testimonies counter the supposed piety of the revolutionaries and the supposed 'forgetting' of sexual violence in revolutionary commemorative culture. A more rigorous reading of (auto)fictional testimonies complicates Ferriter's confident assertion that 'any search for sex in the memoirs and biographies written by Irish republicans of this era will be in vain'.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, Ryan includes the 'fictional' writings of Frank O'Connor in her study of male republicans' writing. As she argues, O'Connor's short-story collection, *Guests of the Nation*, suggests that 'despite their claims to piety, Republican men did engage in romantic relationships with young women'.<sup>45</sup> Michael Cronin has also challenged the failure of historians to critically examine literary sources to gauge attitudes towards sex. According to Cronin, Ferriter's influential study, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland*, treats 'novels much more carelessly than the archival material' leading to a 'one-dimensional, linear historical reading' which privileges official attitudes towards sex and sexuality.<sup>46</sup>

Though Roy Foster includes fiction in his study *Vivid Faces*, he also asserts that 'the world of sex' is 'more or less absent from the drama written and acted by the future revolutionaries'.<sup>47</sup> According to Foster, there 'was little room' in the post-conflict period 'for those whose pre-revolutionary activity had prioritized feminism, anti-patriarchalism and the breaking down of sexual conventions'.<sup>48</sup> However, autobiographical fictionalised narratives pertaining to the revolution frequently address sexuality, including sexual violence, in ways that first-hand accounts do not. Indeed, if historians point to the lack of evidence regarding the

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<sup>42</sup> Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin*, p. 96, R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (Penguin UK, 2014), p. 116. While Todd Andrews has been quoted to support the puritanical outlook and behaviour of the IRA, his writings actually complicate such an outlook. The 'moral rearmament' of the IRA is illustrated in a number of studies by citing the following quote by Andrews: 'We didn't drink. We respected women and [...] knew nothing about them'. Tom Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858–1928: Patriots, Priests and the Roots of the Irish Revolution* (Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 68; Maria Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society, 1800–1940* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 2. However, the full quote is: 'We didn't drink. We respected women and, *except for the amorous Earle*, knew nothing about them'. This reference to 'the amorous Earle', in fact troubles the revolutionaries' supposed sexual innocence. His earlier memoir, *Dublin Made Me* (1979), also alludes to the sex education he received from returned soldiers in the British army.

<sup>43</sup> Clark, 'Violence against Women in the Irish Civil War, 1922–3', p. 85.

<sup>44</sup> Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin*, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> Louise Ryan, 'In the line of fire': Republican Men', p. 58.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Cronin, *Impure Thoughts: Sexuality, Catholicism and Literature in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester University Press, 2012), pp 4–5.

<sup>47</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, p. 115.

sex lives of Irish revolutionaries, literary critics observe that ‘sex and the revolution’ became a popular, if contentious, topic from the 1930s as ‘the War of Independence gained a lurid afterglow’.<sup>49</sup> Popular revolutionary novels routinely drew on the conventions of the literary bildungsroman (even if bildung was seldom achieved) in order to trace the protagonist’s political awakening from childhood to the revolution.<sup>50</sup> These novels often addressed the protagonist’s sexual awakening: even in Carty’s seemingly innocuous novel *The Irish Volunteer*, Art’s transition into adulthood is illustrated through his growing awareness of his own sexuality as he is upset by the ‘disturbing thoughts’ evoked by the ‘dark shapes lying against the ditch’ in the lovers place of Brisket’s Lane.<sup>51</sup> References to sex education through pornographic literature, particularly from France, also emerge. In Carty’s second novel, Rosaleen sends Paul a cartoon postcard from Paris which is suggested to be pornographic in content. As Paul laughs, ‘How would Rosaleen herself have felt, he wondered, had she guessed the real meaning of this alleged comic[?]’. The British soldiers in Mulloy’s *Jackets Green* also have ‘female picture[s]’ hanging on the walls.<sup>52</sup> As highlighted in the two previous chapters, a number of fictionalised accounts by revolutionaries also subvert hegemonic conceptions of sexuality and even hint at homosexual partnerships. These representations challenge Andrews’ oft-cited assertion that ‘[d]irty stories were rare and homosexuality unknown’.<sup>53</sup>

### **‘There Were No Brothels’: Documenting and Denying Commercial Sex**

One of the key arguments supporting the ‘relative scarcity of sexual abuse’ in Ireland was during the revolution is that the IRA perceived the ‘humane treatment of women’ to be a key feature of their ‘soldierly behaviour’.<sup>54</sup> In opposition to colonial stereotypes of the Irish, revolutionaries were at pains to present themselves as rational, pious and dutiful in accordance with an ‘Irish Catholic middle-class puritanism and code of respectability’.<sup>55</sup> The Free State army even hired an official photographer in the latter part of the civil war to communicate the

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<sup>49</sup> Nicholas Allen, ‘Reading Revolutions, 1922–39’, Clare Hutton and Patrick Walsh, *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, Volume V: The Irish Book in English, 1891–2000* (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 95.

<sup>50</sup> See Ciaran O’Neill, ‘The Irish Schoolboy Novel’, *Éire-Ireland* 44, no. 1 (2009), pp 147–68.

<sup>51</sup> Francis Carty, *The Irish Volunteer* (J. M. Dent & Sons, 1932), p. 56.

<sup>52</sup> Francis Carty, *Legion of the Rearguard* (J. M. Dent & Sons, 1934), p. 111; Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 28

<sup>53</sup> C. S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Mercier Press, Limited, 1979), p. 299.

<sup>54</sup> Clark, ‘Violence against Women in the Irish Civil War, 1922–3’, p. 85.

<sup>55</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class, and Conflict* (Springer, 2015), p. 60.

soldierly professionalism associated with the army uniform.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, anti-treaty republicans sought to present themselves as sober, disciplined and respectable in contrast with recently-recruited ‘trucileers’ whose behaviour, as Gavin Foster sums up, was characterised by ‘loose morals, drunkenness, ‘vile language’ and ‘shocking’ behaviour towards women’.<sup>57</sup> For Clark, such discourses around respectable models of behaviour meant that ‘Irish militants seldom took pleasure in attacks on the private sphere – and, by extension, female bodies’.<sup>58</sup>

However, such model of military behaviour is undermined by the engagement of revolutionaries in commercial sex – an aspect of the revolution yet to be incorporated into scholarly debates on sexual violence. Elided in first-hand accounts and absent from official remembrance, the complicated relationship between male revolutionaries and prostitution was actively suppressed in the aftermath of the war. Mulloy’s novel *Jackets Green*, discussed in Chapter One, was deemed ‘obscene’ because of a brothel scene. As the author sardonically responded, ‘of course, in the island of saints and scholars, there were no brothels’.<sup>59</sup> This suppression of prostitution reflects the new regulation of sexual behaviour that accompanied the foundation of the state. While Dublin had a flourishing red light district at the start of the twentieth century, the sex trade was quickly shut down after independence due to opposition from lobby groups, such as the Legion of Mary.<sup>60</sup> While anti-prostitution lobby groups in Britain, Belfast and Dublin were often made up of middle-class Unionists and suffragettes, John Borgonovo outlines that in Cork, the anti-prostitution vigilante was spearheaded by Sinn Féin activists.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, as Borgonovo notes, ‘[r]epublican records largely omit mention of these activities’.<sup>62</sup>

If republicans were reluctant to document opposition to prostitution, their reliance on prostitutes to gather intelligence was even more contentious. Dan Breen mentioned in 1959 that the ‘lady prostitutes’ at Phil Shanahan’s public house on Foley Street ‘used to pinch the guns and ammunition from the Auxiliaries or Tans at night’ to pass on to the IRA.<sup>63</sup> Yet while Breen recounts his frequenting of Shanahan’s pub in his 1924 (most likely ghostwritten)

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<sup>56</sup> See Timothy Hanson Ellis, ‘Visual Culture and Visuality in the Politics of the Irish Free State, 1921–1939’ (Ph.D., Teesside University, 2020).

<sup>57</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War*, p. 61.

<sup>58</sup> Clark, ‘Violence against Women in the Irish Civil War, 1922–3’, p. 84.

<sup>59</sup> Des Hickey, ‘How Colonels almost took over!’, *Sunday Independent*, 22 September 1974, p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> Una Crowley and Rob Kitchin, ‘Producing ‘Decent Girls’: Governmentality and the Moral Geographies of Sexual Conduct in Ireland (1922–1937)’, *Gender, Place and Culture* 15, no. 4 (2008), p. 364.

<sup>61</sup> John Borgonovo, ‘Exercising a Close Vigilance over Their Daughters’: Cork Women, American Sailors, and Catholic Vigilantes, 1917–18’, *Irish Historical Studies* 38, no. 149 (2012), p. 93.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>63</sup> Dan Breen, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, WS1739, 13 February 1959, p. 36.

memoir, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, he does not dwell on the assistance provided by prostitutes. However, in contrast to Breen's early elision of the Shanahan's prostitutes, the frequenting of brothels by male revolutionaries features strongly in popular novels. Rearden Conner's (1907–1991) first novel, *Shake Hands With the Devil* (1933), documents the assistance granted to IRA men in Dublin by prostitutes in its opening pages. The protagonist, Gaelic Leaguer Kerry Sutton, stumbles across a Black and Tan ambush and is dragged to safety in a 'filthy hole' 'in the Dublin slums'.<sup>64</sup> He is cared for by two prostitutes who chant '[t]is one of the boys, God help him'.<sup>65</sup> The novel later presents extra-marital sex not as immoral, but as a natural outcome of the strain of warfare as '[w]hen numbers of men are herded together they lose self-control and self-respect, unless the will is very strong. Quite decent fellows do strange things under such circumstances'.<sup>66</sup> The protagonist's comrade agrees that 'war does bring out the animalism in man', but reassures him that '[t]here are such people as prostitutes in the world, Sutton!'.<sup>67</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Conner's graphic thriller was banned in Ireland.<sup>68</sup> As the author reflected in his later autobiography, 'God help the Irish writer who [...] dares to suggest that such a creature as a prostitute exists in Ireland!'.<sup>69</sup> Nor was the novel accepted into the canon of revolutionary fiction, despite its commercial, and later cinematic, success. For Ernest Boyd, it did not live up to the standards of other revolutionary writings as '[t]he inaccuracy of the local references and the impossibility of the dialect placed in the mouths of the characters are symbolic of the general distortion of the picture as a whole'.<sup>70</sup> Conner's ambivalence towards the nationalist movement may also have influenced the hostility towards the novel. The son of a Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) policeman who was educated by the Christian Brothers in Cork, Conner's *Shake Hands With the Devil* presents the dehumanisation of the IRA and Black and Tans in equal proportions.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, there seems to be an autobiographical strain running through the novel; as one reviewer noted, Conner's hero 'is a man who might well be

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<sup>64</sup> Rearden Conner, *Shake Hands with the Devil: A Novel* (J.M. Dent, 1933), p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>68</sup> In the film version, the character of Kitty Brady was presented as a barmaid rather than a prostitute. However, the author refused to change passages in the novel for the sake of making it 'acceptable to the Irish censor' on its serialisation in the Irish edition of the *Sunday Dispatch*. He further lamented that '[s]everal Irish people, including those who should know better, have tried to tell me that no such character existed in Ireland. I disagree.' Rearden Conner, 'Shake Hands With the Devil [Letter to the Editor]', *The Irish Times*, 27 May 1959.

<sup>69</sup> Rearden Conner, *A Plain Tale from the Bogs* (J. Miles, 1937), p. 241.

<sup>70</sup> Ernest Boyd, 'Joyce and the new Irish writers', in David Pierce (ed.), *Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century: A Reader* (Cork University Press, 2000), pp 388–389.

<sup>71</sup> Liam Harte, *The Literature of the Irish in Britain: Autobiography and Memoir, 1725–2001* (Springer, 2009), p. 193.

his own prototype – a young medical student in Dublin who is hurled into the midst of the struggle'.<sup>72</sup>

Louis Lynch D'Alton (1900–1951) included a similar sketch of the role of prostitutes in the revolution in his anti-romantic novel *Death is So Fair* (1936). Active on the fringes of the IRA as a messenger during the war of independence,<sup>73</sup> D'Alton claimed he wrote *Death is so Fair* 'in order to cure myself of the writing mania which my mother deplored in us all, and exhorted me to get out of my system'.<sup>74</sup> The novel controversially traces the corruption of the protagonist's virtuousness to reflect the disillusion which shadowed the events of the revolution. Manus Considine is forced to set aside his ambitions of becoming a priest due to his IRA activism. Echoing Rearden Conner, he is harboured by Dublin prostitutes; this episode is indicative of the profound impact of the revolution on social relations: 'Considine remembered how he had once shrunk from a woman such as this. He had touched the grim side of life too often since then.'<sup>75</sup> The corrosion of his piety is also manifested through his 'sordid' sexual relationship with Norah Cogan and his complicity in the murder of a (perhaps innocent) man. The novel ends as the protagonist gives himself up to the Black and Tans, essentially committing suicide.<sup>76</sup> Although not banned, the novel garnered mixed reviews. In an acerbic review in *The Irish Press*, Aodh de Blácam, resolutely refuted such 'immoral' behaviour by 'the patriots': 'We might remark that the fighting men of Ireland were men of honour and cleanness, perhaps more truly so than any other army.'<sup>77</sup>

Despite such claims of exceptional Irish morality, these popular novels not only reflect the social upheaval of the revolution, they also reveal wider post-war concerns regarding the impact of war on male sexual behaviour.<sup>78</sup> While prior to the First World War, war was considered to redeem and support dominant conceptions of male heterosexuality, the end of the war generated fears that 'war had obliterated the sexual instinct in men, or at least had shifted men's sexual drives away from women and toward other men and the desire for further

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<sup>72</sup> Dorothy Elliott, 'A Novel of the Irish Civil War Days Literary Guild Selection for February', *The Post-Crescent*, 3 February 1934, p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Patrick Maume, 'Louis d'Alton', Dictionary of Irish Biography.

<sup>74</sup> *El Paso Times*, 12 June 1938, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> Louis D'Alton, *Death Is So Fair* (Doubleday, Doran, Incorporated, 1938), p. 119.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick Maume, 'Louis d'Alton'.

<sup>77</sup> Aodh de Blácam, 'As Others Wish To See Us', *Irish Press*, 15 September 1936, p. 6. Aodh de Blácam (1890–1951) was the son W. G. Blackham, a Newry-born Protestant M. P. He was a member of the London Gaelic League, converted to Catholicism and was imprisoned for his Sinn Féin activism during struggle for independence. A prolific journalist, he was a strong voice for Catholic-nationalist opinion throughout the 1930s.

<sup>78</sup> Jason Crouthamel, 'Male Sexuality and Psychological Trauma: Soldiers and Sexual Disorder in World War I and Weimar Germany', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17, no. 1 (2008), p. 63.

violence'.<sup>79</sup> As Jason Crouthamel contends, '[a]s men grew accustomed to killing, it was believed, they became addicted to it as a heightened experience that drained sexual drives and turned men impotent'.<sup>80</sup> According to such narratives, the excess of sexual frustration, though uncomfortable, was excusable in the context of war.

The idea, as evident in *Jackets Green*, that visiting brothels constituted both a release of pent-up anxiety and a bonding experience for combatants also features in Jake Wynne's novel *Ugly Brew*. Published in 1936, *Ugly Brew* was described by reviewers as 'mostly autobiographical'<sup>81</sup> and seemingly written 'from first-hand experience'<sup>82</sup>. The novel traces the life of Dublin-born Martin O'Neill from his childhood, through his involvement in the Easter Rising and independence struggle, until his emigration after the civil war. Wynne strongly stresses the mental strain of warfare. As a reviewer in the *Belfast Newsletter* observed, the novel draws attention to the 'appalling state of nerves which their dreadful work created amongst the gunmen'.<sup>83</sup> According to Nora Hault, *Ugly Brew* was '[p]robably the most detached account of the 1916 rebellion and afterwards that has been written from within'.<sup>84</sup> Seán O'Faoláin also reviewed the novel favourably – though apprehensive of its 'brutalism' – and contended that many of the incidents described are 'recognisable as operations of the Squad'.<sup>85</sup> *Ugly Brew* was certainly set up to be read as autobiographical; a deliberately tantalizing disclaimer affirms that 'the locality of all real incidents has been purposely misplaced'.<sup>86</sup>

Regardless of the author's true experience, *Ugly Brew* is a remarkable testimony of the disillusionment of disenfranchised Free State army officers in the context of the sexual politics of the period. The trauma of the revolution is explicitly connected to the 'sense of sex-guilt' from growing up in Catholic Ireland.<sup>87</sup> Twelve-year-old Martin is terrified of forgetting his lessons for school, as 'failure to memorise it would mean another throbbing hand'.<sup>88</sup> In markedly feminist commentary, Martin's mother's life is characterised by 'the bearing of the children, the rearing of them, the slavery of the house, the nagging worry over meagre finances

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>81</sup> *The Irish Book Lover*, Volumes 24–25, January 1936 – December 1937, p. 91.

<sup>82</sup> *Montrose Review*, 19 June 1936.

<sup>83</sup> *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 May 1937.

<sup>84</sup> *The Observer*, 21 June 1936, p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> Seán Ó Faoláin, 'Book Section', *Ireland To-Day*, June 1936, p. 72.

<sup>86</sup> I have yet been able to uncover the true identity of the author. A scrawl in my own second-hand copy disparagingly suggests that the writer might be a woman. The comprehensive details of certain IRA activities, however, suggest that the novel has a strong factual basis.

<sup>87</sup> Wynne, *Ugly Brew*, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid*, p. 4.

and the submission to an irascible husband'.<sup>89</sup> Despite her piety, Martin's mother 'made many attempts [...] to instruct him in sexual matters, but could never get beyond dark and veiled hints as to some dreadful evil thing'.<sup>90</sup> This need for sexual education is born out of fear, as the mother warns her son to 'keep away from 'queer' companions, never to go near certain streets in Dublin, to avoid advances from strangers in the street'.<sup>91</sup> Wynne's hint at children's vulnerability to possible sexual assault went against widespread efforts at the time to conceal the extent of assaults against children. As Keating contends, the 'purity movement' actively hushed up possible cases of child abuse and was accused of 'being more concerned about contamination of the Irish people by the foreign press than the real evils in Irish society'.<sup>92</sup>

Like in *Jackets Green*, Wynne presents sexual brutalisation as a symptom of the trauma of civil war. After the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty, Martin gets wrapped up in the 'home-made' 'Terror' and enlists in the Free State army. He quickly and disturbingly becomes absorbed in his work: 'This time Martin was a hunter, and truth to tell, he enjoyed it.'<sup>93</sup> However, the thrill Martin gets from shooting, arresting and carrying out raids takes its toll. He resorts to alcohol, considers suicide, and eventually flees from Ireland to try his chances in South Africa. Martin's moral and psychological decline is illustrated through his visit to the brothels of the Monto, along with a number of his fellow soldiers: 'By the time the crowds began swarming out of the music-hall, and the bar was about to close, the four were thoroughly drunk. The tables and lights seemed to Martin to be the flickering parts of a mirage. His speech was thick and his eyes glazed.'<sup>94</sup> While his colleagues are clearly regulars at the brothel, Martin seems to be embarrassed in this new environment, feeling 'he ought to pull himself together, for the sake of good manners'.<sup>95</sup> He asks to excuse himself, but is led into one of the upper bedrooms by a prostitute. The subsequent events are only referred to euphemistically: 'He was feeling very sick. The woman came and loosened the hooks on his high collar. That was the last he remembered'.<sup>96</sup>

Despite the restrained description of Martin's encounter with the prostitute, Wynne's novel was criticised for this sexual scene. A reviewer in the *Irish Book Lover* hoped the novel would be on the censor's list because 'patriotism is exploited for the enjoyment of its mockers,

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<sup>89</sup> *ibid*, p. 106.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> Anthony Keating, 'Sexual Crime in the Irish Free State 1922–33: Its Nature, Extent and Reporting', *Irish Studies Review* 20, no. 2 (1 May 2012), pp 135–55.

<sup>93</sup> Wynne, *Ugly Brew*, p. 296.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid*, p. 306.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid*, p. 308.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid*, p. 310.

and the poor are exploited to provide sordid sex incidents'.<sup>97</sup> Somehow, the novel evaded censorship, unlike *Jackets Green* and *Shake Hands With The Devil*. In fact, it was a bestseller in Dublin and was re-issued in 1937.<sup>98</sup> Mulloy and Wynne's novels offer similar descriptions of soldiers visiting brothels under the influence of alcohol. However, consumption of alcohol is not intended to justify their actions in either novels. The narrator in *Ugly Brew* suggests that had Martin been aware of the situation, he still 'probably would not have minded'.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, Tim's search for sexual, romantic relief in *Jackets Green* is presented as the result of uncontrollable natural instinct. Alcohol is no more than a convenient mask: 'He had a sudden wild desire to see the girl undressed – and to undress her himself. He argued with himself that if there was any wrong in it, he would be excused on account of the wine he had taken, and then he put his arm round the girl and bent down to kiss her'.<sup>100</sup>

In illustrating the men's frequenting of brothels, the novels break a silence regarding the relationship between Irish revolutionaries and prostitutes. Indeed, the aftermath of the civil war coincided with high rates of venereal disease. This caused a certain embarrassment, as such behaviour could no longer be solely attributed to British forces. In 1926, Jesuit priest and social reformer Richard Devane blamed all parties for the epidemic:

In the past few years we have had wave after wave of men passing over the country – Black and Tans, British soldiers, Auxiliaries, Irregulars, Free-State troops – *all of whom* have been living under war conditions, with all that means in a soldier's life, as far as vice is conceived, and to whom the prostitute made a ready appeal every opportunity 'leave' was granted' (my emphasis).<sup>101</sup>

In *Ugly Brew*, Martin's inferred intimacy with the prostitute is uncovered when he 'began to experience acute discomfort of a disgusting nature', to which the doctor laughs, 'you've been with a woman lately'.<sup>102</sup> Mulloy's novel also alludes to venereal disease, as Mick, a captain in the Free State army, orders his men to stay away from the local women: 'I warned yeh not to have anythin' to do wid Molly Dolan. Yeh know what happened to Skitter Doyle... G'waan, get back ta the camp, yeh lot a bowsies, an' no more actin' the goat.'<sup>103</sup> While seldom

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<sup>97</sup> Cited in Allen, 'Reading Revolutions, 1922–39', p. 95.

<sup>98</sup> 'What Dublin Is Reading', *The Irish Times*, 4 July 1936.

<sup>99</sup> Wynne, *Ugly Brew*, p. 307.

<sup>100</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 307.

<sup>101</sup> Cited in Philip Howell, 'Venereal Disease and the Politics of Prostitution in the Irish Free State', *Irish Historical Studies* 33, no. 131 (2003), p. 331.

<sup>102</sup> Wynne, *Ugly Brew*, p. 312.

<sup>103</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 203.

acknowledged, venereal disease was indeed a feature of the revolution. Dubliner Larry Nelson confided in Ernie O'Malley that IRA men were lectured on VD and given lime juice to 'keep them cool as they were getting too hot with the women'.<sup>104</sup> Meanwhile Patrick McLogan commented that a number of 'neutral' IRA combatants refused to participate in the compulsory venereal disease inspection in the Curragh camp, leading to the resignation of the line captain.<sup>105</sup> This refusal to take part in the inspection perhaps underscores the officers' attempts to disassociate themselves from promiscuous sexual behaviour, but may also suggest an attempt to conceal any sexual transgressions within the ranks.

As Devane's statement suggests, prostitutes were routinely viewed as responsible for the spread of disease, as they made 'a ready appeal' to men at 'every opportunity'. Thus, if male sexual frustration was an unavoidable consequence of war, female prostitutes were the culpable party and were widely vilified for their role in distracting men from their wartime activities. In *Ugly Brew*, not only does the prostitute seduce Martin and 'pass on' a venereal disease, the 'bitch' also steals several pound notes that he had left in his pocket.<sup>106</sup> In *Jackets Green*, the women are again debased and accused of 'encouraging' the soldiers, despite the parish priest's insistence that Molly is 'the best girl in the village, goes to Mass every morning, attends Sodality regularly, and is as pure as the snow'.<sup>107</sup> In the original manuscript, one of the prostitutes is named Phyllis – a name deliberately employed as a pun on syphilis. When the officers are refused drinks, they violently thrash the brothel and proceed to 'wreck every joint in the place', much to the dismay of a solitary Metropolitan policeman. In an adjoining house, the men physically assault a 'drunken woman lying sprawled on her face on a couch in the parlour': '[o]ne of the party went over, lifted up her skirt, and gave her four hefty smacks'.<sup>108</sup> Sexual brutalisation, and even violence against prostitutes, is thus conveyed in both popular narratives as an uncontrollable outcome of the strain of warfare. But if violence against prostitutes was easily ascribed to the heightened stress of war, did this tolerance of violence against prostitutes also apply to other forms of violence against civilians and female revolutionaries?

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<sup>104</sup> Larry Nelson, Interview with Ernie O'Malley, UCDA, P17b/89. Thanks to Aaron Ó Maonaigh for sharing this reference.

<sup>105</sup> Síobhra Aiken et al. (eds), *The Men Will Talk to Me: Ernie O'Malley's Interviews with the Northern Divisions* (Merrion Press, 2018), p. 17.

<sup>106</sup> Wynne, *Ugly Brew*, p. 312.

<sup>107</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 203.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, p. 308.

## Regulating Sexuality and the Legitimisation of Sexual Violence

The punishment of, and violence against, prostitutes reflects the moral sexual policing which republicans often prided themselves on. While republicans frequented brothels and contracted venereal disease, they also actively punished women who were associated, or were believed to be associated, with the enemy. The mistreatment of prostitutes in Wynne's and Mulloy's novels is reminiscent of the often-sexualised violence perpetrated against women who were deemed to jeopardise the republican cause. While the Crown Forces used similar tactics against female republican women and civilians to undermine the republican guerrilla campaign, the IRA adopted hair shearing as a 'targeted and widespread' means of disciplining potential female spies.<sup>109</sup> Referred to as 'docking', the act of cropping a woman's hair was a direct attempt to sabotage her sexual appeal and prevent further romances.<sup>110</sup> Though a number of scholars categorise such forcible hair shearing as 'gender-based violence', I concur with Connolly that hair cutting is 'intrinsically *sexual*' and could be accompanied by unwanted bodily contact or further sexual humiliations.<sup>111</sup> Other forms of such humiliation include tarring, while in one case female republicans were dragged out of bed and covered 'with green paint' by Free State soldiers.<sup>112</sup> All of these attacks involve public humiliation and aim to symbolically undermine a woman's femininity. As Machnik-Kekesi contends, 'punishing women for the transgression of gender – informing, spying, and consorting with the enemy – was not simply an intrinsically militarized and politicized act, but also a way of performing masculinity and punishing transgressions of Irish femininity'.<sup>113</sup> Ironically, therefore, the ideals of honour and cleanliness allowed for sexualised violence, specifically against women, in the name of preserving such honour.

Ernie O'Malley addresses the IRA's regulation of sexuality in his fictional writings. In the humorous unpublished short story 'Piracy on the High Seas', a group of exiled republicans in New York city recall that six anti-treatyites held up a Cunard liner off Cobh in order to force a young bank clerk to marry the sister of one of their dead comrades who had gotten 'into

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<sup>109</sup> Byrne, 'Keeping Company with the Enemy', p. 1.

<sup>110</sup> Maurice Quinn, Military Service Pension Collection, MSP34REF12835.

<sup>111</sup> Linda Connolly, 'Towards a Further Understanding of the Violence Experienced by Women in the Irish Revolution', p. 33.

<sup>112</sup> Ryan, 'Drunken Tans', p. 15. 'Girls Painted Over', *Irish Independent*, 14 September 1922, p. 5, *Belfast Newsletter*, 14 September 1922, p. 5. Ironically, Brigadier Paddy O'Daly was tasked with investigating this case; O'Daly was later implicated in a sexual assault in Kenmare. See also letter from Eta Horgan to Sheila Humphreys c1968, Sheila Humphreys Papers, UCDA, 106/1389.

<sup>113</sup> Gabrielle Machnik-Kekesi, 'Gendering Bodies: Violence as Performance in Ireland's War of Independence (1919–1921)', 2017, p. 64.

trouble'. The men wanted to redress the girl's offense against public morality by arranging her a marriage, whether or not the 'boyo' was actually responsible: 'We heard that he wasn't the only one that had been playing around her and that maybe had been true enough for she wasn't up to much, but we were thinking of her brother'.<sup>114</sup> Although the bank clerk escapes to England after a stand-off with the boat's captain, O'Malley's story reflects attempts by the IRA to regulate sexual decency.

Nevertheless, sexually-controlling violence by Irish men against Irish women occupies an uncomfortable position in revolutionary remembrance. Writing in the early 1960s, Máirtín Ó Cadhain (1906–1970), writer and IRA volunteer, addressed the absence of the practice of hair-cropping in veterans' memoirs.

Fágfaidh mé faoi dhaoine a throid ar son na hÉireann cuntas a thabhairt faoin gcaoi a ndéanaidís plaiteacháin de mhná a bhíodh ag tabhairt comhludair do Dhúchrónaigh agus do shíothmhaoir eascaoiteannaíthe Rí Shasana. Is rud é nach bhfaca mé aon trácht sna leabhair air, ach tá mé cinnte go bhfuil sé ar fad cnuasaithe isteach ar sheilfeanna na Staire Míleata. Tá súil agam go bhfuil fear maith acu le hortha na luch a chur san áras úd. Theagmhódh gurb é sin an ghné dár gcuid cogáíocht is mó a gcuirfidh ár sliocht suim ann.<sup>115</sup>

However, once again, literary testimonies provide nuanced and often complex representations of practices of hair cropping. The impact of these humiliations was less a result of the physical attack of the hair shearing than to the public shaming that followed and in which the wider community were complicit. It could, therefore, be argued that cultural representations of hair shearing and other sexualised assaults risk perpetuating this shaming effect and enacting a further (textual) violation. Moreover, fiction is a highly problematic term to use in relation to testimony of sexual violence given the many ways in which the testimonies of survivors of sexual abuse are called into question. Nevertheless, Emma V. Miller argues that in 'a social environment so often averse to hearing about the realities of sexual violence, fiction has

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<sup>114</sup> Ernie O'Malley, 'High Seas Piracy', Ernie O'Malley Papers, Archives of Irish America #060, Box 2, Folder 15, NYUL. My thanks to Cormac O'Malley for sharing a typed version of this story.

<sup>115</sup> 'I will leave it to those who fought for Ireland to document how they used to shave off the hair of women who kept company with Black and Tans and with ostracised police officers in the service of the Crown. It is not something I have seen mentioned in books, but I am sure that it is all gathered on the shelves of the [Bureau of ] Military History. I hope there is someone good enough in there to banish the mice from the building. I would chance that this is the aspect of our war that future generations will be most interested in'. Máirtín Ó Cadhain, *Barbed Wire* (Coiscéim, 2002), p. 433.

provided a unique testimonial opportunity without the personally directed censure connected to the narrating of first-hand experiences'.<sup>116</sup> As she further outlines:

Literature and the real-life incidence of sexual violence have always had a fractious relationship, but the two have continued nevertheless to coexist, often in the same textual space. Historical fiction has both helped and hindered medical, criminal, political and popular discourses surrounding the topic of sexual violence, challenged what it is, and helped to define it, confronted who is to blame, and aided our appreciation of how language can both be part of the healing process and part of the problem.<sup>117</sup>

In women's fiction, such as that of Smithson and Ní Ghráda discussed in the previous chapter, possible sexualised violence is only inferred in references to unravelling clothing or in coded allusions to attacks on vulnerable women in rural – and significantly, faraway – communities. While these indirect representations draw attention to such occurrences and to the widespread fears of vulnerability to such violence, they nevertheless shy away from direct representation. These accounts reflect the tendencies in first-hand testimonies to avoid or elide sexual violence. Violence against women may not be 'unspeakable', but it is nonetheless 'unseeable'.

### Fictionalising Hair Shearing

This type of indirect representation is most common in the case of hair shearing. In a number of male-authored texts, such disciplinary attacks are casually presented as a natural aspect of the conflict. Michael Farrell's semi-autobiographical novel, *Thy Tears Might Cease*, published posthumously in 1964 but purportedly written by 1937,<sup>118</sup> includes a passing reference to hair cutting: 'There were Auxiliaries in the neighbourhood and already an old man had been killed, a woman's head cropped, and a twelve-year-old boy was in bandages'.<sup>119</sup> Told in the passive voice, Farrell's reference does not clarify whether the attack was carried out by Crown forces or the IRA. In D'Alton's novel, *Death is So Fair*, hair cropping is more explicitly

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<sup>116</sup> Emma V. Miller, 'Trauma and Sexual Violence', in J. Roger Kurtz (ed.) *Trauma and Literature* (Cambridge University Press, [1929] 2018), p. 227.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>118</sup> Monk Gibbons, 'Introduction', Michael Farrell, *Thy Tears Might Cease* (Knopf, 1964), p. xv.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Farrell, *Thy Tears Might Cease* (Knopf, 1964), p. 418.

described as a disciplinary practice endorsed by the IRA, as Katie Tumulty's hair is 'cropped close by the 'boys' for having been seen talking to Tans'.<sup>120</sup> Conamara IRA Volunteer, Colm Ó Gaora, also wrote a rather problematic short story, 'An Díoghaltas', about a father who burns all his daughter's possessions for falling in love with a British officer and sets off to London to avenge her elopement.<sup>121</sup>

While these accounts might seem to endorse this punishing of women who transgress purity norms, D'Alton hints at the double standards underpinning such attacks. The character of Hanly recounts that '[s]ome o' the lads' who 'were for getting virtuous' and were planning to crop Norah Cogan's hair.<sup>122</sup> Nora's crime was 'being in trouble'.<sup>123</sup> Ironically, the putative father was an IRA volunteer. However, the violence of such haircutting is downplayed. Hanly succeeds in distracting his fellow volunteers from carrying out the assault by suggesting, '[s]ure, that only puts women in the fashion nowadays instead o' making an example o' them'.<sup>124</sup> This reflects a tendency to trivialise haircutting by equating it with women's fashion.<sup>125</sup> Leo Buckley, for example, factually outlines in his witness statement how he and his IRA colleagues curbed the socialisation of young girls with British soldiers by 'bobbing the hair of persistent offenders'. As he recounts, 'short hair was completely out of fashion at the period, and the appearance of a girl with 'bobbed' hair clearly denoted her way of life'.<sup>126</sup> Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Last September* (1929) similarly belittles the brutality of such attacks through evoking contemporary flapper style fashions. The character of Lois, who had her eye on a British officer, claims she 'should be bobbed', suggesting that she would be happy to pay the consequences for her sexual transgression. She has to be reminded by Lady Naylor of the malicious nature of these attacks: 'But masked men [...] would be a very nasty experience for a girl your age'.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> D'Alton, *Death Is So Fair*, p. 186.

<sup>121</sup> Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State: 1922–1939* (Penn State Press, 2010), p. 323. Colm Ó Gaora, 'An Díoghaltas', *As na Ceithre h-Áirdibh: Cnuasach Gearr-scéal* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1938).

<sup>122</sup> D'Alton, *Death Is So Fair*, p. 201.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>125</sup> Machnik-Kekesi, 'Gendering Bodies', p. 61.

<sup>126</sup> Leo Buckley, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 1714, 16 December 1957, p. 3. Cited in Machnik-Kekesi, 'Gendering Bodies', p. 61.

<sup>127</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (Random House, 2015), p. 61. See also Byrne, 'Keeping Company with the Enemy'.

### Hidden in Plain Sight: Tomás Bairéad's 'An Dath a d'Athraigh'

A more complex representation of hair shearing emerges in Tomás Bairéad's (1893–1973) 'An Dath a d'Athraigh', a short story described by Philip O'Leary as 'an unidealised account in which the heads of suspected female collaborators are shaved'.<sup>128</sup> Active in the Moycullen group of Volunteers from 1916, Bairéad was imprisoned in Galway Gaol during the independence period and worked on the staff of the *Irish Independent* in Dublin during the civil war.<sup>129</sup> Bairéad's 'An Dath a d'Athraigh', echoes accounts of IRA veterans in its calm allusion to the necessity of shearing the hair of promiscuous young women in order to prevent them from associating with police officer, Pislín:

Bhí triúr ná ceathrar de na cailíní splanntha ina dhiaidh, cé nach ndeacha cailín as a' bparráiste seo in éindigh le póilín ná le saighdiúr leis na bliadhanta roimhe sin. Na cailíní is mó a shanntuigh sé, má b'fhíor dó féin, iad seo a raibh dearbhráithaireacha ná gaolta acu in Arm na hÉireann le eólas a phiocadh astu. Agus mo náire iad – d'éirigh leis cúpla babhta. Cuireadh an scéal amach go raibh sé pósta agus go raibh a bhean ina comhnuidhe i gconndae éigin eile, ach ní raibh aon mhaith ann go ndearnadh diogháil ar ghruaig bheirt ná triúr acu.<sup>130</sup>

However, Pislín has a change of heart and becomes one of the most successful IRA combatants during the war of independence. As the war draws to an end, he makes plans to marry Máire Phádraic Bhig, one of the girls whose hair had been cropped.<sup>131</sup> By suggesting that Máire was genuinely and romantically in love with Pislín, Bairéad complicates the earlier indication ('mo náire iad') that the women were driven by unmanageable desire. But Pislín's change of 'colours' also highlights that this violence against the women due to their associations was arbitrary and contingent, not on their own allegiances, but on men's. Pislín and Máire Phádraic Bhig never marry. The groom-to-be is shot by Free State soldiers just before his wedding day,

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<sup>128</sup> Philip O'Leary, 'The Irish Renaissance, 1880–1940: literature in Irish', in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary (eds), *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 245.

<sup>129</sup> Tomás Bairéad, *Gan Baisteadh* (Sáirséal agus Dill, 1972), p. 154.

<sup>130</sup> 'There were three or four girls who were after him, even though no girls from this parish had courted a guard or a soldiers for years before that. The women he was most interested in, if he was to be believed, were those who had brothers or relatives in the IRA so he could gather information from them. And shame on them, he was successful on a number of occasions. A rumour was spread around that he was married and that his wife lived in another county, but it was no good until two or three of them had their hair docked.' Tomás Bairéad, *An Geall a Briseadh* (Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1938), p. 129.

<sup>131</sup> 'He and Máire Phádraic Bhig fell in love – one of the girls whose hair was cropped – and the marriage and all was arranged by the time we started to fight among ourselves.' *ibid*, p. 138.

reflecting perhaps Bairéad's own genuine dismay with the events of 1922–1923.<sup>132</sup> The story was published in the 1938 collection, *An Geall a Briseadh*, which was the recipient of the Douglas Hyde Literary Fund and was praised for being written in the 'purest quality [Irish] as spoken in Connemara'.<sup>133</sup> Bairéad's collection, which included such an ambiguous account of violence against women, made the *Irish Times* bestseller list and was on school syllabuses for decades.<sup>134</sup> The often perceived 'hidden' crimes against women were often 'hidden' in plain sight.

### Communal Shaming: Jim Phelan's *Green Volcano*

While many accounts of 'disciplinary' violence are presented in euphemistic or vague terms, Jim Phelan's thriller novel *Green Volcano*, presents a graphic depiction of the assault on schoolteacher, Molly Coolin, for 'belonging' 'to the enemy':

On the previous evening a crowd of men and girls had seized Molly, torn her clothes from her, and driven her naked out of the village. Half insane with fear and shame, she had run from house to house, only to be coldly repulsed by all. Then she had wandered in the fields by the river, seven miles, *shunned or reviled by everyone who met her*.

Ben knew already the terrible Irish punishment for a spy-woman. Ruthless with a male traitor, it was only seldom, and in the most aggravated cases, the revolution executed a woman spy. Usually the known female traitor was treated as Molly had been treated – a punishment quite as efficient as the death penalty (my emphasis).<sup>135</sup>

Phelan's novel drew on his own revolutionary experience. A native of Dublin, he participated in the occupation of the Rotunda in January 1922 along with Liam O'Flaherty, and subsequently travelled to Cork with O'Flaherty and Seán McAteer to establish Irish Citizen Army branches.<sup>136</sup> From March 1922, he engaged in occasional gunrunning from Liverpool to Ireland. After being involved in a botched robbery of a post office apparently ordered by the IRA, Phelan was sentenced to death by hanging – later commuted to life imprisonment – for the murder of a post clerk. His 1938 novel touches on some of these experiences; it follows

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<sup>132</sup> Aingeal Ní Chualáin (ed.), 'Tomás Bairéad, 1893-1973', *Tomás Bairéad Rogha Scéalta* (Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>133</sup> 'Award for Irish Journalist: Stories in Gaelic', *Irish Independent*, 21 August 1939, p. 6.

<sup>134</sup> 'What Dublin is Reading', *The Irish Times*, 2 July 1938, p. 7.

<sup>135</sup> James Leo Phelan, *Green Volcano* (P. Davies, Ltd., 1938), p. 223.

<sup>136</sup> Patrick Maume, 'Jim Phelan', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, February 2016.

Glasgow-native Ben Robinson on a mission across Ireland to enact revenge on the spy who had betrayed his gun-running father in the lead up to 1916. Although an incredibly prolific writer of both fiction and autobiography, Séamus Phelan contends that the novel is essential to understanding his father's revolutionary life:

Jim's part in the Irish War of Independence [...] became a defining event of his early life. To understand this, you have to read *Green Volcano*, his 1938 novel of the Irish struggle which he called 'the most important book'. This will tell you all you need to know about Jim's views on the formation of the Irish state, and how and why he was involved.<sup>137</sup>

Phelan's frank treatment of taboo sexual topics is characteristic of all his work. In his autobiography, *The Name's Phelan*, he claims that he was disowned by his family for being spotted entering a lodging house: 'If I had been infected with leprosy and tuberculosis, had my arms and legs amputated, and was then carried off to a prison for lifelong torture, that would have been trivial, in their eyes, compared with the story they had heard.'<sup>138</sup> He thus came to be a strong opposer of the 'highly moral' culture of Ireland, that was responsible, to his mind, for a 'good many cases of repressed or frustrated people going over the line of mind-safety'.<sup>139</sup> His jail writing, including the novel, *Lifer* (1938), and the memoirs *Jail Journey* (1940) and *Tramp at Anchor* (1954), broach the taboo topic of the 'psychosexual damage inflicted by confinement' and the 'prevalence of homosexuality, forced or voluntary' in prisons.<sup>140</sup> Reviewing *Jail Journey* (1940), George Orwell commended Phelan for this 'straightforward discussion'. He admired Phelan's indictment of the penal system and of the 'genuinely horrible' psychosexual damage it provoked. Despite the disturbing instances described, Orwell asserted that Phelan's revelations were 'not just pornography in disguise'. He understood Phelan rather as a reliable witness who aimed to record an aspect of prison life 'taken for granted and joked about by prisoners, warders and everyone else connected with a prison' but which 'cannot even be hinted at in any public discussion of the subject'.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> A.J Lees, 'Jim Phelan's Liverpool Home', George Garrett Archive. Available at: <https://www.georgegarrettarchive.co.uk/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/73-jim-phelan-s-liverpool-home.html> (Accessed 18 April 2020).

<sup>138</sup> Jim Phelan, *The Name's Phelan: The First Part of the Autobiography of Jim Phelan* (Belfast: Blackstaff Pr, 1993), p. 121.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>140</sup> Patrick Maume, 'Jim Phelan', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

<sup>141</sup> George Orwell, 'Review of *Jail Journey* by Jim Phelan', *Horizon: A Review of Literature and Art* (Faber & Faber Limited, 1940), p. 171.

Not surprisingly, Phelan's writing frequently fell foul of the Censorship Board. Nevertheless, *Green Volcano* offers insights into the nature of gender-based violence during the revolution that challenge standard representations. While hair shearing is often presented in vague, but nevertheless justified, terms in male veterans' accounts, Phelan underscores the entire community's involvement in such shaming. Not only was Molly seized by 'a crowd of men and girls' but she was also 'shunned or reviled by everyone who met her'. Not unlike the character in Bairéad's short story, Molly was unaware of her own transgression. The charge against her was her relationship with Liam Donohue who was deemed a 'traitor'. However, Molly herself was unaware of Donohue's dual life. Although the protagonist, Ben, understood that Molly was 'blameless', he doubted that any 'court would hold her so, much less an impromptu village meeting'.<sup>142</sup>

Phelan's fictionalised account suggests that 'the terrible punishment for a spy-woman' included public shaming through being stripping naked. While it has been suggested that hair shearing was seldom accompanied by sexual assault, Phelan points to the fact that sexual humiliation was a key aspect of disciplining women who were associated with the enemy.<sup>143</sup> Molly's mistreatment and shaming is considered to be worse than death; sobbing, she exclaims 'now my mind and body are branded for ever'.<sup>144</sup> Although contemporary newspapers associated the practice of hair shearing with attacks by masked men at night,<sup>145</sup> Phelan's account is a reminder that the targeted humiliation of suspected women spies could involve sexual humiliation and also that the shaming effect of the violent physical attack was contingent upon the sanction of the wider community.

### **The Sexual Objectification of Female Revolutionaries**

While the IRA shamed young women deemed to be too friendly with the enemy and in need of discipline, female revolutionaries were also regarded as a sexual abomination. In her study of female militants during the First World War, Lucy Noakes describes how women's militarism challenged gender conventions as their entrance into the warzone both distanced

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<sup>142</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 224.

<sup>143</sup> Connolly strongly argues against the tendency to separate hair cutting from other forms of sexual violence. As she contends, 'Hair cutting, for instance, did not neatly occur as a separate or discrete practice in isolation from other acts of violence and terror perpetrated against women'. Connolly, 'Towards a Further Understanding', p. 4.

<sup>144</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 224.

<sup>145</sup> Ryan, 'Drunken Tans', p. 80.

them from traditional conceptions of femininity and also threatened the ‘military and sexual prowess of men’. As a result, British female militants were

perceived as both ‘mannish’ lesbians, taking advantage of the opportunities the war offered to dress and act as men and to live in a homosocial world, and as promiscuous heterosexuals, motivated to join the women’s service because of the access it offered to the male combatant.<sup>146</sup>

The latter image of the sexually promiscuous female revolutionary was particularly widespread in the Irish context. Indeed, the prevalence of the romance triangle in civil war novels, as referred to in Chapter Two, plays on this erotisation of the female revolutionary. Seán O’Faoláin’s 1932 short-story collection *Midsummer Night Madness* – another text to be targeted by the Censorship Board – also portrays a ‘disquieting erotization of military action’.<sup>147</sup> Even the delivery of messages by Cumann na mBan women is sexualised, as the narrator recounts how a female revolutionary turned ‘modesty aside to undo the top buttons of her blouse, drew out the usual small envelope, and handed it to me, warm as usual from its nest’.<sup>148</sup> In *Shake Hands With The Devil*, Rearden Conner records that ‘[t]here was a good deal of promiscuity [...] at this time’.<sup>149</sup> He documents how female revolutionaries ‘carried revolvers in their handbags or concealed them on their persons and passed them to their menfolk at the psychological moment’ and that republican ‘men and women’ sometimes ‘shared the same quarter, though not officially’<sup>150</sup>. This erotisation of military women was expounded in his 1937 memoir *A Plain Tale From The Bog* in which he argued that republican women in Cork ‘wear revolvers at their waists. They stalk around with their men, and live with them in the abandoned military and police barracks’.<sup>151</sup>

Conner’s comments were criticised in the *Belfast News*. A reviewer quipped that ‘[s]urely it is not correct to say of the last stand of the Irregulars at Cork’.<sup>152</sup> However, these representations of female revolutionaries happily endeavouring to sexually satisfy the male Volunteers were pervasive. Even in Carty’s relatively mild novel, *Legion of the Rearguard*, the protagonist wonders ‘wouldn’t any girl feel excited in the presence of a young man whose

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<sup>146</sup> Noakes, ‘A Disgrace to the Country They Belong To’ [Online].

<sup>147</sup> Paul Delaney, *Seán O’Faoláin: Literature, Inheritance and the 1930s* (Irish Academic Press, 2014), p. 157.

<sup>148</sup> Seán O’Faoláin, *Midsummer Night Madness: And Other Stories* (J. Cape, 1932), p. 166.

<sup>149</sup> Rearden Conner, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Literary Guild, 1934), p. 101.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid*, p. 101.

<sup>151</sup> Conner, *A Plain Tale from the Bogs*, p. 4.

<sup>152</sup> *Donegal Democrat*, 20 November 1937, p. 9.

daring exploits were the talk of the countryside?’<sup>153</sup> In *Green Volcano*, Bridget Whalen embodies such representations: ‘’Tis not sure whether we live or die,’ said Bridget, seriously. ‘It is sure that we hate the Tans and we love our boys. An’, faith,’ she added, laughing again, ‘the boys have need of a little lovin’ now an’ then, with the life they have to lead on the hills.’<sup>154</sup> Liam O’Flaherty also routinely conflates female militancy and sexuality in his fiction. In the novel *The Assassin* (1928), Kitty Mellett personifies the ‘mixture of sex and idealism which is so strange a characteristic of women revolutionaries’.<sup>155</sup>

Many fictional accounts document the warnings given to the IRA to behave well, yet even such warnings hint at their inevitable transgression. In O’Flaherty’s banned civil war novel *The Martyr* (1933), the Free State officers are warned they can ‘[f]lirt with the girls, but don’t put them in the family way, because one girl with a bastard in her shawl at the barrack gate is enough to ruin the reputation of a whole regiment’.<sup>156</sup> Mulloy’s novel too highlights how certain volunteer attempt to mellow their fellow soldiers’ talk:

‘How would yeh like ta share yer bed wid her?’ said somebody.

‘Anythin’ wid a skirt on id do me,’ said another.

‘I’d prefer the skirt off,’ said a third.

‘Aw, here, you fellows, chuck that talk. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves, behaving like a lot of corner boys; *you’re letting us down*’.<sup>157</sup>

The fine line between discipline and transgression is particularly apparent in Frank O’Connor’s 1929 short story, ‘September Dawn’. An IRA commander on the run, Hickey, chastises a junior officer for his drinking and for taking an inappropriate interest in Sheela, the young girl harbouring them. However, despite Hickey’s disciplining of his junior, he finds himself overwhelmed by ‘the desire for some human contact’ and when he encounters the young girl early in the morning he ‘took her in his arms and kissed her’.<sup>158</sup> The story thus points to the variance between public and private admissions of such liaisons, but also highlights that young women aiding IRA men could be expected to satisfy their romantic and, maybe, sexual needs. Sheela’s promiscuousness is again hinted at through her non-conformism to traditional models

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<sup>153</sup> Carty, *Legion of the Rearguard*, pp 7–8.

<sup>154</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 160–161.

<sup>155</sup> Liam O’Flaherty, *The Assassin* (Wolfhound Press, 1993), p. 27.

<sup>156</sup> O’Flaherty, *The Martyr*, p. 148.

<sup>157</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 140.

<sup>158</sup> Frank O’Connor, ‘September Dawn’, *Dublin Magazine*, Vol. IV, No 3, July 1929, pp 7–20. Frank O’Connor, *Guests of the Nation* (Macmillan, 1931), p. 98.

of femininity. She is described as ‘another terrible rebel’, wears ‘men’s boots twice too big for her’ and has never been ‘prouder’ than when aiding the rebels.<sup>159</sup>

The widespread sexualisation of republican women in both political rhetoric and literary forms may hint at an uncomfortable reality. There are a number of testimonies which hint at the fact that women used their sexuality, or were even expected to, in order to gather information or to escape from difficult situations. IRA leader Michael Brennan recounts in his memoir that the Punch sisters protected the IRA men they were harbouring by inviting British officers into their home and entertaining them under the same roof.<sup>160</sup> Síghle Humphrey’s recalls that she and her comrade, Nora Brick, evaded arrest by Free State soldiers using their ‘considerable charm’,<sup>161</sup> while a newspaper report in April 1923 claimed that ‘a girl messenger was used in an attempt to seduce a soldier from his allegiances to Ireland’.<sup>162</sup> Despite these expectations, female revolutionaries attempted to distance themselves from the possibly sexualised nature of their activism. Peg Broderick, a key Cumann na mBan activist in Galway city, was tasked with luring British officers down to the city’s docks. She finishes her witness statement by regretting this aspect of her *modus operandi*: ‘Before concluding, I would like to say the job I hated most was enticing British soldiers down the docks in order to have them relieved of their arms by the Volunteers’.<sup>163</sup> Katty Shinnors of Ennis, Co. Clare, also reassured the Pensions Board in 1941 that ‘there were only ten girls in our Cumann na mBan who could be accused of going with British soldiers and they aren’t claiming Pensions [sic]’.<sup>164</sup> Despite the essential intelligence work which may have required women to socialise with soldiers, these women were excluded from compensation claims – and even ostracised by their female colleagues.

Moreover, the eroticisation of female activists was connected to their vulnerability to physical, and even sexual, discipline. In O’Flaherty’s *The Martyr* (1933), a female revolutionary holding ‘the ammunition drum’ is chastised by Sheehan who angrily exclaims ‘[t]hat’s a nice powder puff for a respectable girl [...] If I were your father, I’d redden your bottom for you’.<sup>165</sup> Such a threat of physical, and even sexual violence, illustrates Sharon

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<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*, p. 97; p. 90.

<sup>160</sup> Michael Brennan, *The War in Clare, 1911–1921: Personal Memoirs of the Irish War of Independence* (Four Courts Press, 1980), p. 100. Cited in Louise Ryan, ‘In the line of fire’, p. 51.

<sup>161</sup> Uinseann Mac Eoin, *Survivors: The Story of Ireland’s Struggle as Told through Some of Her Outstanding Living People Recalling Events from the Days of Davitt, through James Connolly, Brugha, Collins, Liam Mellows, and Rory O’Connor, to the Present Time* (Dublin, Ireland: Argenta Publications, 1980), p. 345.

<sup>162</sup> *Evening Herald*, 26 April 1923, p. 1.

<sup>163</sup> Broderick-Nicholson, ‘Witness Statement’, p. 5.

<sup>164</sup> Cumann na mBan Nominal Rolls, CMB/72.

<sup>165</sup> O’Flaherty, *The Martyr*, p. 133.

Crozier-De Rosa observation that women who took up arms ‘put all women at further risk of wartime male violence’, as ‘men could not abide by notions of chivalry that required them not to strike a woman when women were pointing guns at them’.<sup>166</sup> Noakes further evinces that the image of the sexualised female militant ‘left female soldiers vulnerable to both rumours regarding their sexuality as, by having stepped outside of traditional discourses of femininity they are seen as woman ‘out of place’ and are thus unprotected by ideas regarding ‘respectable’ female sexuality, and to physical sexual assault by male soldiers’.<sup>167</sup>

This conflation of female militancy and sexual promiscuity may explain why Eithne Coyle’s 1952 witness statement elided both her possession of a gun and minimised the possible sexualised nature of her treatment during her internment. In turn, this may have had implications on the reporting of sexual violence among female revolutionaries. If female revolutionaries were culturally represented as promiscuous, might this have deterred them from reporting actual attacks for fear of undermining their political agency?

### **Sexual Assault in Fiction by Male Revolutionaries The Case of Seán Caomhánach’s *Fánaí***

The scholarly emphasis on the lack of evidence of sexual violence during the revolution is contrasted by the proliferation of sexual violence in literature. According to Nicholas Allen, Liam O’Flaherty, Lennox Robinson and William Butler Yeats, ‘all used sexual violence as [a] motif of Irish culture post-independence’.<sup>168</sup> Aside from understanding sexual violence as a cultural motif, however, such representations should be considered in terms of their relationship with the social reality.

One of the first novels to be censored in the Free State for its depiction both of female sexuality and sexual assault was completed in the Curragh camp by anti-treaty internee Seán Ó Caomhánaigh, better known as Seán a’ Chóta. Published at the end of 1927, *Fánaí* was a ‘romanticised version’ of the author’s life and loosely based on his experience on docks and mills in New England, and on a ranch in Dakota. However, there was concern that certain extracts recalled ‘French sex-psychology literature’ and were not suitable for school

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<sup>166</sup> Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890–1920* (Routledge, 2017), p. 233.

<sup>167</sup> Noakes, ‘A Disgrace to the Country They Belong To’ [Online].

<sup>168</sup> Nicolas Allen, ‘Frank O’Connor and Critical Memory’, in Hilary Lennon (ed.), *Frank O’Connor: Critical Essays* (Four Courts Press, 2007), p. 30.

children.<sup>169</sup> The novel was recalled from shops and eighteen separate extracts marked for removal.

Nearly all of the offensive scenes were semi-erotic conversations which emphasised the female protagonist's sexuality:

Dhruid sí níos giorra dó. D'ardaigh a ghlac is an chros chun a beola. Chaith sé a ghéaga ina timpeall. Ghéill sí dó agus neadaigh ina bhaclainn, a haghaidh iompaithe in airde chuige. Shír a bheola a beola agus dhlúthaíodar [...] B'shin é an chéad uair riamh d'fhreagair sí bréagadh fir. B'é an rud a b'iontaí ar domhan é agus bhí áthas uirthi gurbh é an chéad fhear é.<sup>170</sup>

Ó Caomhánaigh's response to the redaction of such extracts was that 'nothing was in my mind other than language heard very very often among mixed company in the Gaeltacht'.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, Ó Caomhánaigh's civil war prison diary – omitted to date from any historical scholarship – is incredibly forthright in his descriptions of his romantic exploits and complicates the scholarly emphasis on the puritanical attitudes of IRA volunteers. He even asserts that he had no less than forty intimate relationships:

Anois gan dearmad tá áthas orm nár cheanglas i gcuing phósta leis an mnaoi budh dheise ar m'aitheantas an uair sin mar ní bheadh oiread den saoghal feiscighthe agam agus ní fios cad é an clampar a thairngeóchainn ar mo chéile leapan. Ó do bhí mórchuid ar a líon. Tá sé ar mo chumas dachad bean lé n-a rabhas conbharsáideach do chóireamh, dachad bean gur bhfeas dom a n-uile rún – ach b'fhéidir rún mo mheallta.<sup>172</sup>

Indeed, the Dunquin-native corresponded with numerous women during his internment, including Eibhlín and Sighle, whose acquaintance he made in Kilmallock, Co. Limerick, during

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<sup>169</sup> Tuairisc Mhichíl Uí Mhurchadha, 17 Eanáir 1928, N0032, An Gúm. Cited in Teresa Cassin, 'Catalóg Mhionsonraithe de Chomhaid Aistriúcháin an Ghúim 1926–66 mar aon le Staidéar ar an Tionchar a bhí ag Fórsaí Seachtracha Áirithe ar Obair an Chomhlachta Foilsitheoireachta le linn na tréimhse sin' (PhD, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2019), p. 35.

<sup>170</sup> 'She moved closer to him. She brought his hand and belt to her lips. He put his arms around her. She yielded to him and nestled into his arms, her face turned up towards his. His lips sought her lips and they came together [...] It was the first time she had responded to a man's seduction. It was the most extraordinary thing in the world and she was happy that he was her first man'. Seán Óg Ó Caomhánaigh, *Fánaí* (Oifig an tSoláthair, 1928 (chéad eagrán)), p. 74 See Tadhg Ó Dúshláine, 'Scéal Úrscéil: *Fánaí*, Seán Óg Ó Caomhánaigh, 1927', *Léachtaí Cholm Cille*, 19 (1989), pp 93–128.

<sup>171</sup> Ó Dúshláine, 'Scéal Úrscéil', p. 124.

<sup>172</sup> 'I am definitely happy that I did not marry the nicest woman I knew at that time as I would never have seen as much of the world as I have and who knows what trouble I would have brought on my bedfellow. Oh, there was many of them. I could count forty women with whom I conversed, forty women of whom I knew their every secret – except perhaps the secret of luring me.' Micheál Ó Catháin, 'Dialann Phríosúin Sheáin a' Chóta' (Unpublished PhD thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2012), p. 60.

the civil war, and the latter of whom assisted in smuggling his diary out of the Curragh. He also maintained contact with previous lovers, such as New York-based Máire Husae, a granddaughter of Michael Collins' sister Margaret Collins-O'Driscoll.<sup>173</sup> His diaries make regular references to the packages received. These included cigarettes, letter paper, money, rosary beads, and even a fountain pen from New York and were often adorned with romantic kisses and 'sweet nothings'.<sup>174</sup> Ó Caomhánaigh's dramatic dilemma was thus how to choose between his many suitors: 'Ach connus, connus is féidir liom cion do bheith agam ortha go léir, níl duine aca ná fuil go hionmhianta ach, mo lagar! Connus is féidir liom seisear seachtar, ochtar aca do bheith agam?'<sup>175</sup> This openness to sexual matters surprised his fellow internee and poet Joseph Campbell, who wrote that Caomhánach 'told me stories of his early puberty. The tall woman of Dunquin at turf-rick up in the bog. She 45, he 15'.<sup>176</sup>

Ó Caomhánaigh's diary includes a number of semi-erotic passages, not unlike his novel. Many of these relate to his unrequited affection for Neans Ní Theácháin (often referred to as 'Ceann Dubh'), whose walks through Central Park he reminisced about at nighttime.<sup>177</sup> The line between fact and fiction in these diary entries is hard to decipher. On 5 November 1923, he made a plan to both work on his novel and also to write 'gearreachtra ar gach mnaoi des na mnáibh a bhuail liom im bheatha'.<sup>178</sup> One such incomplete sketch is an imaginative reworking of a romantic encounter with 'Ceann Dubh' told from the perspective of the young woman. Set in an 'extremist' basement club under surveillance during the First World War, a group of communist women tell tales of their romantic adventures, trips to the theatre and secret jaunts to road houses on the edge of the city. Reflecting the connections between politically active women and sexual promiscuity, Ceann Dubh sees the 'prince' entering the club and ponders, 'Ní fheadar an bhfuil sé ionphógtha?'<sup>179</sup>

An Seansánach, the perpetrator of the contentious sexual assault in Ó Caomhánaigh's novel *Fánaí*, also cites the supposed sexual liberation of women to justify his attack on Peig de Róiste:

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<sup>173</sup> Máire Mhac an tSaoi also indicated that Seán a' Chóta had a romantic affair with Marie Sjoestedt-Jonval, Máire Francach, the Swedish-born French-Jewish linguist. Máire Cruise O'Brien, *The Same Age as the State* (O'Brien Press, 2012), p. 107.

<sup>174</sup> Ó Catháin, 'Dialann Phríosúin Sheáin a' Chóta', p. 105.

<sup>175</sup> 'But how can I be fond of them all, there is not one of them that I do not desire, but alas! How can I have six, seven, eight of them?' Ó Catháin, 'Dialann Phríosúin Sheáin a' Chóta', p. 218.

<sup>176</sup> Joseph Campbell, Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (ed.), *As I Was Among the Captives': Joseph Campbell's Prison Diary, 1922–1923* (Cork University Press, 2001), p. 10.

<sup>177</sup> Ó Catháin, 'Dialann Phríosúin Sheáin a' Chóta', p. 61–62.

<sup>178</sup> 'a short account of every woman of all the women I've met in my life'. Ó Catháin, 'Dialann Phríosúin Sheáin a' Chóta', p. 118.

<sup>179</sup> 'I wonder if he is kissable?', *ibid*, p. 118.

‘An mbeidh tú mar bhean agam, a Pheig’, ar seisean.

‘Ní bheidh mé,’ ar sise go daingean, ‘agus tóg aghaidh do chaoraíocht díom. Níl aon cheart agat teacht faoi mo dhéin ar an tslí seo agus muna bhfágann tú mé glaofaidh mé ar mo dheartháir’.

Ach níor staon sé. Dhruid sé léi agus thug iarracht ar a ghéaga a chur ina timpeall. Chúlaigh sí uaidh céim eile gur bhuail i gcoinne an fhalla. Ní fhéadfadh sí teitheadh uaidh. An rud nach bhfaigheadh sé le bladar gheobhadh sé le neart é [...] <sup>180</sup>

Ó Seansánaigh was apparently not accustomed to being rejected by women and did not understand his own transgression; ‘níor tuigeadh dó an difríocht a bhí idir Peig de Róiste agus mná áirithe a bhuail leis i loganna aitis is óil ar fud an stáit agus thar teorainn i gCeanada’.<sup>181</sup> The novel arguably does not endorse his actions, however: Ó Seansánaigh is clearly the villain in *Fánaí* and is almost successful in his attempt to murder Peig’s partner, Seán. Though the main concern of critics at the time seemed to be the ‘sentimental love scenes’, a reviewer in the *Irish Times* did not think the assault was plausible: ‘We could wish that a book thus recommended were free from such incidents as a woman’s struggle against male violence, recalling the brutality of the American film’.<sup>182</sup>

In contrast, a reviewer in the *Irishman* objected to the censorship given that, ‘[after] all, life has its brutalities and most certainly so have manual labour and war [...] Are these things to be hidden in the new literature of the Irish, to be glossed over and slurred over as if they did not exist’.<sup>183</sup> Ó Caomhánaigh too held the longstanding belief that the writer’s obligation was to be as faithful to life as possible: ‘Dar liom gur cheart don scríbhneoir a bheith chomh fírinneach don bheatha agus a bhíonn an stairí do staid a thráchtas’.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> ‘Will you be my woman, Peg’, he said. ‘I won’t,’ she strongly replied, ‘and take your abuse elsewhere. You have no right to come after me like this and if you don’t leave me be I’ll call my brother. But he didn’t stop. He drew close to her and tried to put his arms around her. She pulled a step back from him until she hit the wall. She couldn’t escape from him. What he couldn’t achieve with charm he would achieve with force.’ Seán Óg Ó Caomhánaigh, *Fánaí* (An Sagart, 1989), p. 15.

<sup>181</sup> ‘He didn’t understand the difference between Peig de Róiste and certain women he met in speakeasies across the state and across the border in Canada’, *ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>182</sup> A., ‘Recent Books in Irish: Two Novels and Some Short Stories’, *The Irish Times*, 20 January 1928.

<sup>183</sup> S. A., ‘A hobo in Irish/ Public Funds and Private Censorship’, *Irishman*, 18 February 1928. Cited in Ó Dúshláine, ‘Scéal Úrscéil’, p. 119.

<sup>184</sup> ‘It is my view that the writer should be as true to life as the historian to the period of his thesis’, *Sinn Féin*, 22 July 1911. Cited in Ó Dúshláine, ‘Scéal Úrscéil’.

The case of *Fánaí* suggests that overt female sexuality was as problematic as sexual violence. Moreover, the idea that sexual violence was the province of American films or of French sexual psychology highlights the promotion of a myth that sexual violence did not occur in Ireland. However, despite the emphasis on sexual assaults by enemy forces, there are a number of further representations of sexual assault in fictionalised accounts by male revolutionaries. Many autofictional narratives that eroticise female revolutionaries also casually hint at women's limited bodily agency. Within this context, the line between consensual and non-consensual intimacy is repeatedly blurred. O'Faoláin's short story 'Fugue' illustrates that sexual relationships, even within marriage, could be conceived of as uncomfortable: the protagonist imagines the future wedding night of a young female revolutionary: '[H]e would draw her toward him and she, feeling her youth passed for ever, would weep softly and secretly in the dark and then smile for her first ungirling'.<sup>185</sup> In Anthony O'Connor's testimonial novel *He's Somewhere In There* (which will be treated in more detail in the next chapter) the senior male characters casually grope the young women, as Mr. Corrigan unproblematically 'gave Maureen a pat on the bottom as she went by'.<sup>186</sup> The Free State captain's description of his youthful sexual relationships in the bustling military town of Athlone includes a highly problematic description of a young suitor's lack of consent: 'I'd gone the whole way with a few charming, willing girls, and except for Nellie Hogan who had cried bitterly, they'd come out of it with eyes sparkling and looking even more beautiful'.<sup>187</sup> In Phelan's *Green Volcano*, the character of Liam writes to Molly in what seems to be an apology letter for forcing himself on her:

Dear Molly, Do not blame me. Shall explain everything later. I am proud – really proud – that your body knew it was I, even when your mind said no. You always refused my urging. Laugh with me, as we will in the future, at the consummation of our courtship...'<sup>188</sup>

These problematic references all highlight what international scholarship on civil war sexual violence increasingly shows: that despite an emphasis on wartime gang rape by external armies, 'rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by those known to the victim – and especially by intimate partners – is far more common than rape by combatants'.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Seán O'Faoláin, *Midsummer Night Madness: And Other Stories* (J. Cape, 1932), p. 78.

<sup>186</sup> Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin*, p. 74.

<sup>187</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere in There*, p. 76.

<sup>188</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 188.

<sup>189</sup> Cohen, *Rape during Civil War*, p. 10.

## The Dangers of the Love Triangle Motif: Peadar O'Donnell's *The Knife*

The writings of Ó Caomhánaigh (1927), O'Faoláin (1932), and Phelan (1938), were all censored. However, sexual assault also appeared in novels that evaded censorship, such as Peadar O'Donnell's 1930 novel, *The Knife*, which depicts the sexual assault of female revolutionary, Nuala Dhu. As in many popular novels, the female-centred romance triangle (or quadrangle, in this case), is employed to tease out civil war loyalties, as all three suitors betray their own cause to woo Nuala Dhu. The apolitical protestant Dr. Henry agrees to treat Nuala's injured brother, an IRA rebel, in order to impress her, while Orangeman Sam Rowan hides rebels on her behalf despite the risk of falling out with his community. The third suitor, Catholic James Byrne, is motivated to leave the republican fight and join the Free State army after Nuala rejects his advances in a scene reminiscent of the assault in *Fánaí*:

'Will you marry me, Nuala?' he whispered.

'I have no feeling like that for you.'

'I have tried to feel that way,' she said: 'it was no good; it is no good.'

'But you must marry me.'

[...]

'I want you now.'

He put his arms under her knees, and lifted her across his legs.

[...]

She pushed his arms away and got to her feet. He locked his arms around her knees, and looked up into her face.

[...] 'We all fight for something. I fight because I want you.'

He drew her in to him, and kissed her, tore her blouse and kissed her breast, her neck... 'Now will you marry me?'

'James, can't you see, all this means nothing to me.'<sup>190</sup>

Byrne's advances include an implied sexual assault in a passage that is marked by ellipses. O'Donnell's portrayal of the Free State officer's violence towards women may indeed

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<sup>190</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, *The Knife* (Jonathan Cape, 1930), p. 164–165.

have being a politically motivated attempt to degrade the Free State and liken them to cultural representations of brutish Black and Tans. Nevertheless, the consequences of Byrne's pass on Nuala is not teased out. However, when Nuala tears her knee on barbed wire, the visible trail of her female blood alarms the characters in its symbolisation of the unnaturalness of civil war. As Big Michael exclaims, 'There was a day, if blood was seen on Nuala!'<sup>191</sup> The characters seem to suggest that, unlike the previous conflict when the spilt blood of women would have caused outrage, the civil war has led to a silencing of violence against women.

The implied sexual assault of Nuala does not seem to have merited commentary in contemporary reviews or criticism. It could be concluded that censors and critics were more concerned with suppressing 'immoral' or 'sentimental' representations of sexuality (male or female) than sexual violence.

### **Seduction/ Rape?: Liam O'Flaherty's *The Martyr***

Liam O'Flaherty's satirical civil war novel, *The Martyr* (1933), presents perhaps the most explicit account of sexual assault in the context of the revolution. O'Flaherty was one of the earliest chroniclers of the civil war. His short story, 'The Sniper', published in *New Leader* in September 1922, epitomised the 'brother against brother' motif of civil war; a republican sniper shoots at a Free State soldier during the Battle of the Four Courts only to realise he has shot his own brother. His later Dublin novels, *The Informer* (1925) and *The Assassin* (1928), also exploit civil war themes. For critics, O'Flaherty's writings could easily be read through the lens of his experience: a native of the Aran islands, O'Flaherty was severely wounded during his service in the Irish Guards in the First World War. Returning to Ireland in late 1921, he opposed the Anglo-Irish treaty and participated in the communist seizure of the Rotunda hospital in Dublin in January 1922. Purportedly a member of the anti-treaty garrison during the battle of the Four Courts, O'Flaherty emigrated to London shortly after the outbreak of the civil war. However, O'Flaherty famously mocked critics who were too quick to view his novels as empirical fact. As he contended in regards to *The Informer*,

The literary critics, almost to a man, hailed it as a brilliant piece of work and talked pompously about having at last been given inside knowledge of the Irish revolution and the secret

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<sup>191</sup> O'Donnell, *The Knife*, p. 211.

organizations that had brought it about. This amused me intensely, as whatever ‘facts’ were used in the book were taken from happenings in a Saxon town, during the sporadic Communist insurrection of about nineteen twenty-two or three.<sup>192</sup>

Nevertheless, Danine Farquharson highlights the importance of the historical context of his 1933 civil war novel, *The Martyr*. Set in Kerry in the final days of the war, this rather overlooked novel is ‘a multi-dimensional attack on gunmen and both sides of the Irish Civil War’.<sup>193</sup> As Farquharson highlights, the novel is mediated through the historical context of the civil war, as the setting in Kerry indicates O’Flaherty’s efforts to get ‘right into the heart of that bitter and ugly conflict’.<sup>194</sup> In its satirical undermining of the belief systems of both anti-treaty republicans and Free State officials, *The Martyr* is filled with ‘[b]loodshed, rape, cruelty, whisky-bibbling, bawdy laughter and political madness’, which, as one critic observed, ‘tear around between the covers of this book like laughing hyenas on a rabies rampage’.<sup>195</sup> In the midst of this ‘political madness’ is a highly graphic scene in which a Free State officer, Crackers Sheehan, ‘seduces’ secret agent, Kitty Grealey:

‘What do you want, Crackers?’ she said.

‘Whatever is going. Anything left for me?’

‘There’s nothing left for you or anybody. I’m done in.’

‘You will be, if you give me any more of yer impudence.’

He pulled off his tunic and slung it along the floor. Then he came over to the bed and said briskly:

‘Let me pull off yer things for ye. I’m used to jobs like this.’

‘Leave me alone,’ she said, drawing back.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Liam O’Flaherty, *Shame the Devil* (Grayson & Grayson, 1934), pp 119–120.

<sup>193</sup> Danine Elizabeth Farquharson, ‘Rebel Narratives: The Irish Gunman in Fiction and Film’ (Doctoral dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2001), p. 180.

<sup>194</sup> Danine Farquharson, ‘Liam O’Flaherty’s *The Martyr* and the Risks of Satire’, *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 25, no. 1/2 (1999), p. 379.

<sup>195</sup> Wilbur Needham, ‘Is This A Burlesque’, *The Los Angeles Times*, 25 June 1933, p. 29.

<sup>196</sup> O’Flaherty, *The Martyr*, p. 181.

Despite Kitty's protests, Sheehan perseveres. The fear of impending death in the context of war is presented as altering usual sexual norms, and the sexual encounter is conceived of as a type of conquest and a further extension of warfare. Sheehan's insistence on reclaiming Kitty despite the fact that she is promised to another man also reflects the tendency in rape narratives to present the assault as the taking of property from another male:<sup>197</sup>

'I'll give ye a clip in the jaw if ye say another word,' he said, pulling off her second stocking. 'Lie back there now and close yer eyes. I won't be a tick. What ails ye, Kit? Ye used to offer me [a] sugar stick for it once. Don't ye love us any more?'

She offered no further resistance, but she lay back and covered her face with her hands.

'You have no right to do this,' she said, 'because I'm promised to Charley Murphy. He'll kill ye if he hears about this.'

'What's the good of being promised to a dead man?' said Sheehan, loosening her skirt. 'The poor bastard is dead by now.'

'God forgive you! What's that yer sayin'?' she cried, sitting up.

'That's right. Sit up, till I get this dress over yer head. Hup! There is goes.'

'What's that you said about Charley? No. Don't take off any more'.

'Off it all comes. Let go. [...] You should be ashamed of yerself. Not another word now.'<sup>198</sup>

Despite the violence of the scene, the tone shifts after this point, as Kitty is suddenly seduced and 'began to look at him appraisingly as he undressed'.<sup>199</sup> The reader's understanding of the scene as a sexual violation is thus undercut, as Kitty 'threw back the clothes to receive him, as he leaped into bed, wearing his revolver and his string of holy medals'.<sup>200</sup> O'Flaherty's

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<sup>197</sup> Rachel Sarah Jo Macreadie, 'Politicizing the Personal: Reading Gender-Based Violence in Rape Survivor Discourse', (Unpublished Dissertation, University of Melbourne 2014), p. 30.

<sup>198</sup> O'Flaherty, *The Martyr*, pp 181–182.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid*, p. 182.

<sup>200</sup> *ibid*, p. 183.

scene thus draws on classical depictions of rape, such as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which 'blur perspectives of what constitutes seduction and what constitutes rape'.<sup>201</sup> The use of force is reconceived as merely a 'seductive technique' given that 'women are supposed to be coy about their sexual availability'.<sup>202</sup> Moreover, in line with the widespread sexualisation of female revolutionaries, Kitty is likened to a prostitute; it is suggested earlier in the novel that her work as a secret agent had led to her to 'giving herself promiscuously' and '[t]hough not actually a whore, her conduct had of late not been far removed from that profession'.<sup>203</sup>

O'Flaherty's novel raises a number of questions regarding the ethics of representing and reading rape. While the indirect or coded renderings of rape (as outlined earlier) perpetuate the experience of sexualised violence as 'unsayable', O'Flaherty's insistent exposure is equally troublesome and risks inviting voyeurism. Indeed, the rape scene shares three key features that Emy Koopman outlines as posing ethical challenges in depictions of rape: '1. the perpetrator is a sympathetic protagonist throughout the rest of the novel, 2. the scene is described in a way that is blatantly erotic, inviting voyeuristic impulses of the reader, 3. the scene employs an ironic discourse, inviting laughter'.<sup>204</sup> O'Flaherty's scene shares all these characteristics: though brutish and violent towards women, the character of Sheehan was described in contemporary reviews as 'a fine, brave, unintelligent fighting machine'.<sup>205</sup> The resistance of Kitty serves to increase arousal, while there is an ironic, and minimising, twist when Kitty is suddenly charmed by Sheehan. The 'assault' is thus reframed as consensual.

### **'I am Sheila Doon of Magheraliffe...': Public Testimonies in Jim Phelan's *Green Volcano***

O'Flaherty's citizen army comrade, Jim Phelan, once again presents an alternative insight into revolutionary sexual violence. His banned novel, *Green Volcano*, includes a number of hard-hitting references to sexualised violence. The novel contains a description of the sacking of a rural town by the Black and Tans:

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<sup>201</sup> Macreadie, 'Politicizing the Personal', p. 25.

<sup>202</sup> Diana Scully and Joseph Marolla, 'Convicted Rapists' Vocabulary of Motive: Excuses and Justifications', *Social Problems* 31, no. 5 (1984), p. 534.

<sup>203</sup> O'Flaherty, *The Martyr*, p. 178.

<sup>204</sup> Emy Koopman, 'Ethical Challenges When Reading Aesthetic Rape Scenes', 2011, ERMeCC – Erasmus Research Centre for Media, Communication and Culture, p. 7.

<sup>205</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, Books, Volume 9, Issue 2, 1933.

Down in Magheraliffee there was crying [...] For early that morning two lorries had whirled into the village, spouting death. Death and destruction and fire were behind as the lorries drove away. For nearly three hours only it had taken to rape the village, for nearly all the men were away. Over the Clare side maybe.<sup>206</sup>

The reference to the ‘rape’ of the ‘village’ points to the widespread use of rape as a convenient metaphor for colonialism in Irish nationalist propaganda.<sup>207</sup> The use of such metaphors often occludes the actual experiences of rape; as, according to Meg Samuelson, in the war zone ‘women’s bodies are simultaneously saturated with and stripped of meaning; in the process, they are rendered invisible. The raped female body suffers a similar fate: figured as a rhetorical sign, its disfigurements slip from view’.<sup>208</sup>

However, Phelan does highlight the perspective of the violated women and the affective and emotional dimensions of their experience. Unlike in *The Martyr*, he does not aesthetically represent rape, but rather hints at the abuse suffered by the womenfolk during the raid. Jack Keelahan, an officer of the IRA in Magheraliffe, nonchalantly notes, as if ‘reporting the score of a football match’, that the Tans, ‘Done up the rest in the ornery way’.<sup>209</sup> Maura Keenan is described as ‘alive, but she walked slowly and in pain, holding the remnants of her clothes about her’.<sup>210</sup> Their mistreatment leads the women of the village to engage in the ‘revolution’. Having been ‘disciplined, ‘the women naturally swung to the other extreme’ and even enacted revenge on a number of Black and Tans by stoning them to death.<sup>211</sup>

Phelan’s dramatised account of such pillaging perhaps owes something to the reports of atrocities committed across the continent during the First World War, though his autobiographical writings also suggest the sack of Balbriggan may have provided further inspiration.<sup>212</sup> Phelan’s depiction of sexual violence was not appreciated by critic Francis MacManus who felt that Phelan was trying to be ‘Goya’ as ‘[e]verything that could happen in a war is made to happen: savage killing, women battering men to death, mutilation, rape, not to speak of monotonous swearing’.<sup>213</sup> However, a number of other reviewers focused on the

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<sup>206</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 63.

<sup>207</sup> See Ryan, ‘Drunken Tans’, p. 76.

<sup>208</sup> Meg Samuelson, ‘The Disfigured Body of the Female Guerrilla: (De) Militarization, Sexual Violence, and Redomestication in Zoë Wicomb’s *David’s Story*’, *Signs* 32, no. 4 (2007), p. 833.

<sup>209</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 63.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>212</sup> Phelan, *The Name’s Phelan*, p. 268.

<sup>213</sup> F. MacM., ‘Review of *The Troubled House; Green Volcano*, by Rosamond Jacob and Jim Phelan’, *The Irish Monthly* 66, no. 785 (1938), pp 805–806.

novel's historical import. Writer Forrest Reid admitted that '[t]he book reveals an aspect of the war new to me, much of it being concerned with the intrigues of the rival secret services'.<sup>214</sup> A reviewer in *The Irish Times* even notes that 'Phelan took an active part in the mobile struggle, and every line bears the stamp of truth'.<sup>215</sup>

What is remarkable about Phelan's novel is not the various references to violence, including sexualised violence, against women, but the fact that the women are afforded the opportunity to voice their distress. In fact, the women testify at some sort of republican court at the trial of five uniformed British officers. This essentially gives the female characters an opportunity to give first-hand testimony of their personal experience:

I am Sheila Doon of Magheraliffe... I am the wife of an Imperial soldier – God help me. When the lorries came I did not run away. I thought I would be safe. With my papers. One of the men from the lorries tore my clothes. He dragged me on a sofa, but I got away.<sup>216</sup>

Mary Coolin, who was assaulted more seriously, also testifies, albeit through ellipsis:

Molly Coolin came next, her look of embarrassment and shame giving way to cold calm as she faced the prisoners.

'I am Molly Coolin, schoolmistress of Magheraliffe,' she commenced. 'Last Saturday some men attacked my mother. These are two of the men, he and he'. She pointed to Duncan and James. 'A man from the lorry –'

'Yes?' from Tim Rooney, unemotionally.

'A man –'

'Did one of the men from the lorry rape you in your house?' asked the prosecutor.

'Yes'.<sup>217</sup>

By affording his female characters the opportunity to testify in their own names, Phelan's court scene contrasts with representations that compare the violation of the female body to that of the land and thus denies the women's individual identity. As Nicola Henry observes, 'wartime rape is often remembered not to honour the traumatic personal experiences of women, but rather to celebrate or exalt a masculinized war narrative of victory and defeat'.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Forrest Reid, 'Fiction', *The Spectator*, 2 September 1938, p. 30.

<sup>215</sup> 'New Novels', *The Irish Times*, 17 September 1938, p. 7.

<sup>216</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 95.

<sup>217</sup> *ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>218</sup> Nicola Henry, *War and Rape: Law, Memory, and Justice* (Routledge, 2011), p. 117.

The extent to which Phelan's court scenes reflect the legal system of the time is questionable. However, the local republican courts, or Dáil courts, which operated from 1920 until 1924, certainly were progressive. A number of women served as justices and the offences dealt with did include abuses against women.<sup>219</sup> In the novel, the perpetrators are sentenced for their crime. This contrasts the non-prosecution of sexual crime at a national level, such as the cover-up of the assault of Florrie and Jessie MacCarthy by Free State soldiers in Kenmare, Co. Kerry, in June 1923.<sup>220</sup>

Phelan even addresses the psychological consequences of such violations, most notably in the case of the character of Molly. When recalling the raid, Molly euphemistically exclaims that '[w]e have been *civilised* – this morning. That is what happened'.<sup>221</sup> She trembles at the sight of the location of her attack:

'No, not in there,' she said in a strained voice. Her face was very pale, and she trembled a little, as if the sight of the room had reminded her of something terrifying.<sup>222</sup>

After testifying in the Dáil court, she resorts to similar ellipses, busting into tears and exclaiming that 'I've had a --- terrible experience, and I hardly know what I'm saying'.<sup>223</sup> When Molly is later stripped naked by the community for her naïve association with the spy, Donohue, Ben still feels that the 'terrible experience' of her humiliation was less devastating than 'the even more terrible happening to which it was the sequel'.<sup>224</sup> Moreover, it later transpires that her rapist was not in fact one of the British soldiers, but Irishman Liam Donohue who was employed as a spy. Molly's pain is contagious, as Ben could not sleep, 'remembering her strange, horrible crying and the curious, dreamlike unreality of the scene'.<sup>225</sup>

Phelan's attempt to address women's psychological trauma is in contrast to the widespread tendency to gloss over women's sexual trauma in medical, legal and political discourses. While bodily pain in the context of sexual violence could be acknowledged, Joanna Bourke's extensive study of medical, psychiatric, and legal literature on psychiatric trauma reveals scant instances of sexual violence being identified as the cause of neuropsychiatric

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<sup>219</sup> See Mary Kostsonouris, *Retreat from Revolution: The Dáil Courts, 1920–24* (Irish Academic Press, 2020).

<sup>220</sup> See Susan Byrne, 'Keeping Company with the Enemy'; Connolly, 'Sexual Violence in the Irish Civil War', pp 11–14.

<sup>221</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 47.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>223</sup> *ibid*, p. 107.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid*, p. 224.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, p. 224.

conditions such as hysteria, panic attacks, or seizures.<sup>226</sup> Railway passengers or soldiers suffering from ‘shock’ were ‘passive victims of calamity’, but female rape victims were often presented as somehow complicit in their own misfortune.<sup>227</sup> Even though the Irish Military Service Pensions Board routinely sent female revolutionaries claiming for nervous conditions for gynaecological examinations, there is little evidence to suggest that possible sexual traumas were investigated.

### Gatekeepers of the Rape Story?

In her study of rape narratives of the First World War, Philippa Read contends that the prevalence of the topos of silence or the ‘unsaid’ in fictional narratives may indicate ‘an authorial awareness of this silencing process’.<sup>228</sup> Such a process of silencing and recovery is certainly evident in Phelan’s *Green Volcano*; Molly repeatedly struggles to bring her experience into articulation, but she is afforded the opportunity to testify to her experience in court. However, most cultural representations of civil war sexual violence document the experiences of women indirectly and gloss over the emotional consequences of such attacks. The active silencing of women is most directly exposed in O’Flaherty’s *The Martyr*, when Crosby threatens Kitty with violence: ‘I’ll give ye a clip in the jaw if ye say another word’.<sup>229</sup> These narratives are worth considering in relation to the wider economy of rape representation which functioned as the ‘gatekeeper’ of the rape story and determined what types of stories were ‘tellable’ or not.<sup>230</sup> From the denial that sexual violence occurred in Ireland in the reception of Seán Ó Caomhánaigh’s *Fánaí*, and the relative insignificance, and perhaps normalisation, of sexual assault in Peadar O’Donnell’s *The Knife*, to the reframing of sexual violence as consensual (and the victim as promiscuous) in Liam O’Flaherty’s *The Martyr*, these narratives all boldly reflect on a taboo aspect of the revolution. Yet as much as they break a silence, these accounts authored by male revolutionaries nevertheless partake in a discourse in which female victims could easily be presented as culpable, and in which the reporting of sexual violence was a highly risky venture.

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<sup>226</sup> Joanna Bourke, ‘Sexual Violence, Bodily Pain, and Trauma: A History’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 3 (1 May 2012), pp 25–31.

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>228</sup> Philippa Read, “‘I Am Expected to Say Something. I Know Not What’ (Vivanti 1918, 146): Silence and Working through in Rape Narratives of the First World War’, *Modern & Contemporary France* 27, no. 3 (3 July 2019), pp 309–21.

<sup>229</sup> O’Flaherty, *The Martyr*, pp 181–182.

<sup>230</sup> Macreadie, ‘Politicizing the Personal’, p. 2.

## Sexualised Violence against Men

If sexualised violence against women was taboo, sexual violence against men was even more contentious. Jim Phelan's novel, however, addresses the issue. In a scene that hints at castration, it is reported that when Dave was captured by the Tans, they 'amused themselves' and 'cut' him. In response, Dave's partner, Dora seeks revenge on the man responsible and posts his 'alive' back from London as proof that 'he [the Black and Tan responsible] will not be marrying any more than Dave Keeler'.<sup>231</sup> This tale is presented as gossip in the novel and not necessarily factual. That said, such a story may reflect narratives told at the time. There are reports in popular histories, however hard to determine, that a number of anti-treaty civil war prisoners were castrated.<sup>232</sup> While the widespread depiction, and even acceptance, of women as victims has facilitated research on sexual violence carried out against women, the issue of sexual violence perpetrated against men remains understudied internationally, and has eluded scholarly discussion of the Irish revolution to date. Yet the sexual humiliation of men is hinted at in men's accounts.<sup>233</sup> Seán a' Chóta's Curragh diary is one of the few testimonies that document the medical inspections required of anti-treaty prisoners, which included the shaving of pubic hair and the humiliation of being stripped naked in front of others.<sup>234</sup> Mulloy's *Jackets Green*, also hints at sexualised mistreatment. The torture methods of the Free State officers are referred to as 'sadistic', while British soldiers pull IRA prisoners naked from their beds:

'Come along, show a leg, show a leg,' the voice repeated, and an Auxiliary approached the bed.... 'Come along there, Paddy', said the Auxiliary, shaking Dan with his foot. 'Up and kiss the sergeant.'

'Kiss yer granny's aunt,' mumbled Dan, wagging his shoulder irritably.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Phelan, *Green Volcano*, p. 172.

<sup>232</sup> 'In one prison in the southwest castration was regularly employed as a method of torture'. James Mackay, *Michael Collins: A Life* (Random House, 2012). 'In Kerry [...] interrogations were conducted with the aid of a hammer and men went mad or were found to be castrated', Tim Pat Coogan, *The IRA* (Praeger, 1970), p. 40.

<sup>233</sup> Lady Gregory's diary includes a number of references to sexualised violence against men, including an instance in July 1921 when men in Mayo 'were stripped naked on a bridge, beaten with rifles, indecently treated and then thrown over the bridge into the river'. Lady Gregory, *Lady Gregory's Journals: Book One to Twenty-Nine, 10 October 1916–24 February 1925* (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 276.

<sup>234</sup> Ó Caomhánach exploits his description of the men's showering to assert his own masculinity, contending: 'níor bheag é mo bhród asam féin ar feicsint suim gach aon'ne im chneas geal agus im dheunamh. B'é mé an t-aon duine ar ár líon nár órduig an dochtúir do ball áirighthe do bhearradh.' [I was proud in myself when I saw everyone's interest in my bright skin and appearance. I was the only one of us who the doctor didn't order to shave a certain part'], *Dialann Sheáin a' Chóta*, p. 24.

<sup>235</sup> Mulloy, *Jackets Green*, p. 33.

## Public Humiliation in Tadhg Gahan's *Tom Creagan*

The psychological consequences of such sexual humiliation is perhaps most strongly suggested in the remarkable autofictional novel *Tom Creagan*, by Tadhg Gahan (1895–1962), published under the pseudonym, Dermot Barry. The novel, published in 1931, traces the protagonist's experience at the National University, his training in the Irish Volunteers, involvement during Easter Week, imprisonment in Wales, his later volunteer activities and gradual disillusionment with the violence of war. The novel was awarded a Tailteann prize for Literature in 1928 and was regarded as 'one of the best stories of the period dealt with'.<sup>236</sup> As one reviewer observed, Gahan's concern 'is with the conflict of the mind. The outer world is treated with the utmost economy; the purpose is to tell us of the inner world'.<sup>237</sup> Like many such novels, *Tom Creagan* has eluded scholarly attention as a consequence of its ambiguous blend of memoir and fiction. The limited literary appeal of the novel is clear from reviews of the novel outside of Ireland. A perceptive Australian-based reviewer observed that 'the appeal of the book is to Irishmen rather than to students of literature, especially to those Irishmen who have vivid personal recollections of the Easter rebellion' (my emphasis).<sup>238</sup>

The novel documents the protagonist's gradual disillusionment with revolutionary violence and his conversion to pacifism. A number of events are influential in this turn, including the death of a comrade during the 1916 Rising, and Creagan's disapproval of IRA targeting of supposed 'spies'. Another catalyst is the humiliation of the protagonist when he is strip-searched on the streets of Dublin:

For a half-hour, Tom stood half-clothed in the miserable night, while the slow, absurd, search went on... and how ridiculous he was making himself, with all the people looking at him, and some of them, the girls, tittering, as the officer pulled up his shirt.<sup>239</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Tom dies tragically from grief following the death of his brother. Though the novel includes the disclaimer that '[a]ll of the characters in this story are fictitious; and some of the incidents are possibilities rather than records of actual historical events', the novel was read as autobiographical. As one critic argued in a review of Gahan's *Tom Creagan* and David Hogan's short-story collection, *Dark Mountain*, 'they could not have the qualities

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<sup>236</sup> J. J. H., 'Review of Dermot Barry's *Tom Creagan: a Novel*', *Irish Book Lover*, Vol. XIX, September–October 1931, pp 149–150.

<sup>237</sup> 'A New Irish Writer: Tailteann Prize Novel: Tom Creagan', *Irish Press*, 23 October 1931, p. 4.

<sup>238</sup> *The Age* (Melbourne), 5 December 1931, p. 4.

<sup>239</sup> Dermot Barry, *Tom Creagan; a Novel* (At the Sign of The Three Candles, 1931), p. 173.

they possess unless actual experience had guided the authors' pens'.<sup>240</sup> Although the author's use of a pseudonym may have aimed to subvert such biographical readings, the protagonist's revolutionary experience expressly mirrors that of the author. A native of Wood Quay, Dublin, the individual behind the pseudonym of Dermot Barry was Tadhg Gahan (1895–1962). A commerce student in UCD, Gahan was a member of the Volunteers; he was involved in storing arms in the lead up to the Rising and a member of the garrison at Jacob's factory. This resulted in his imprisonment in Frongoch in the aftermath of the Rising. On his release in August 1916, he re-joined the 'C' Company, Battalion II, Dublin Brigade and claims that during this period he attended 'weekly drills, and 'all other parades as ordered'.<sup>241</sup>

However, and quite unusually, Gahan resigned from the Volunteers in May 1920. When being interviewed before an Advisory Committee for a Military Service Pension on 8 June 1928, Gahan attributed his resignation to the fact that he had moved out to Rathfarnham.<sup>242</sup> This reason did not sit well with him, however. The following day, he wrote to the board, to clarify that his resignation was not 'due to my going to live in the county'.<sup>243</sup> While he does not offer an alternative reason, *Tom Creagan* indicates that Gahan's ideological reservations were the real reason for his decision to leave the Volunteers; an experience he represented under the thin veil of fiction, a medium through which personal humiliations, among other traumas, could be suggested.

## Conclusion

Gahan's remarkable novel indicates that fiction could provide a self-protective means to address more taboo traumas. However, most of the texts in this chapter point to the problems of textualising sexual violence, and even the risks of disclosure. The various strategies of evasion in women's testimonies pose more questions than they answer regarding the nature of sexual violence during the revolution. Nevertheless, this chapter does illustrate that the oft-assumed culture of silence surrounding sexual violence was not as pervasive as imagined. Fictionalised testimonies written by male revolutionaries complicate the emphasis on sexual

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<sup>240</sup> D. 'Tales of the Troubles', *The Guardian*, 24 December 1931, p. 5.

<sup>241</sup> Tadhg Gahan, Application for Military Service Pension, MSP34REF1127.

<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*

innocence, cleanliness and honour advanced in official remembrance, foregrounded in much self-representation, and further promoted in historical studies. These accounts, rather problematically, often normalise violence against women as a natural consequence of the excess of masculinity and the anxiety of war. Moreover, disciplinary violence against women, which could be sexualised in its nature, could paradoxically be justified as a means to regulate sexual promiscuity. The widespread sexualisation of female revolutionaries in popular discourse was also accompanied by the suggestion that militant women were particularly vulnerable to physical and sexual assault.

The representations of sexual violence against women in this chapter highlight the incredibly fine line between consensual and non-consensual relations and suggest that, despite an insistence on the sexual brutality of the Black and Tans, sexual violence was also a feature of civil war. Jim Phelan's writings are something of an anomaly in his attention to the psychological consequences endured by victims of sexual assault. Debates around these representations associate sexual violence with the influence of French psychology or American movies, suggesting thus that audiences were reluctant to hear of the possibility of such occurrences in Ireland. Moreover, it would appear from the censoring practices of the Irish Censorship Board that depictions of men's immorality was as offensive as representations of violence against women.

Ultimately, this chapter underscores the dialogic nature of testimony and its reliance on audience. Audiences willing to hear about sexual violence were arguably limited. The following chapter considers another body of testimony which struggled to find a sympathetic, confirming audience: testimonies that explicitly address the author's perpetration of violence, including violence against women.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### **‘I KILLED AT LEAST A DOZEN FELLOW IRISHMEN’: NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN PERPETRATOR TRAUMA TESTIMONY**

George Lennon was head of the Waterford anti-treaty IRA. About two weeks after the siege of Waterford in July 1922, he claimed he suffered a complete ‘nervous breakdown’. Treated by Dr. W. White for ‘severe gastritis + neurasthenia’, he was under medical supervision for August and September before retreating to England for a ‘complete change’ for three months. Lennon sought various treatments for his reoccurring nervous breakdowns throughout his life; he went to a number of sanatoriums in the United States, sought out osteopaths and was put on various diets. Unable to work, he fought to secure a disability/wound pension from the Department of Defence. In many correspondences, Lennon emphasised the ‘unusually strenuous nature’ of his service, claiming he had taken ‘part in seventeen major operations, before my health finally broke down’. In particular, he emphasised the severe beating to his head he received on his capture by British Military near Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford, in May 1921.<sup>1</sup>

Lennon’s personal testimonial writings point to other traumatic aspects of his service – his execution of neighbour and RIC constable Michael Hickey, and his physical rejection of a female revolutionary, referred to as Kathleen. His memoir, *Trauma in Time* (c. 1971) concludes with an imagined reconciliatory scene in which the author is reunited with the two deceased:

Kathleen and the constabulary sergeant were some way off beckoning him on. Leaving her companion she came to meet him and this time he did not repulse her. Kathleen no longer looked sad and they smiled happily at each other. The three of them walked hand in hand towards the source of the mountain stream.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> George Lennon, Application for Military Service Pension, MSP34REF11591.

<sup>2</sup> George Lennon, *Trauma in Time: (An Irish Itinerary)* (Unpublished: c. 1971), p. 46. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/6362572/GGL\\_TRAUMA\\_IN\\_TIME](https://www.academia.edu/6362572/GGL_TRAUMA_IN_TIME) (Accessed 8 August 2020).

See also ‘Memoirs Of George Lennon’, available at:

[http://www.waterfordmuseum.ie/exhibit/web/Display/article/317/Memoirs\\_Of\\_George\\_Lennon\\_.html](http://www.waterfordmuseum.ie/exhibit/web/Display/article/317/Memoirs_Of_George_Lennon_.html). (Accessed 8 August 2020). Also cited in Terence O’Reilly, *Rebel Heart: George Lennon: Flying Column Commander* (Mercier Press Ltd, 2009), p. 260.

Rather than write in the first person, Lennon employs the distancing strategy of third-person narration to address these difficult memories. This use of third-person narration is one of a number of self-protective narrative strategies he adopted. He also addresses his role in the execution in two separate dramas, namely the television play *Down by the Glen Side* (1952) and the theatrical sketch *Thou and I* (c. 1971). All the while he spoke little of the revolution to his children, preferring to relegate matters such as the ‘unmentionable’ Civil War ‘to the dustbin of history’.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter examines testimonies in which the act of perpetrating violence meets with the writer’s ‘imperative to tell and be heard’.<sup>4</sup> The act of bearing witness is generally not associated with perpetrators. Even in a legal context, the accused has a right to remain silent. As a result, audiences are arguably not accustomed to listening to perpetrator confessions.<sup>5</sup> Given that all testimony is interpersonal, this chapter explores the complex distancing, (self)rationalising and exculpatory strategies employed by combatants in order to render their acts of perpetrating violence bearable both to themselves and to their audiences. I argue that the sense of ‘disillusionment’ often associated with post-revolutionary culture needs to be considered through the lens of perpetrator trauma; indeed, Frank O’Connor’s highly influential 1931 short story ‘Guests of the Nation’ directly tackles the psychological implications of committing violence and became a script which was repeatedly mobilised by veterans to portray their own experience of committing violence. In particular, this chapter focuses on George Lennon’s plays and hybridised memoir *Trauma in Time* (c. 1971) and Anthony O’Connor’s novel *He’s Somewhere in There* (1975).<sup>6</sup> Representing anti- and pro-treaty stances respectively, both texts were produced in the 1970s as the Northern Troubles erupted. Once again, the authors felt the need to swerve from the conventions of traditional autobiography in order to unveil, register, and perhaps exorcise, their trauma. Intriguingly, George Lennon’s revolutionary experiences were also fictionalised in Úna Troy’s remarkable novel *Dead Star’s Light* (1938); Troy’s female perspective of perpetrator trauma will also be considered in this chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> Ivan Lennon, *Lennons In Time* (Unpublished: c. 2017), p. 177, p. 105. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/32727560/LENNONS\\_IN\\_TIME](https://www.academia.edu/32727560/LENNONS_IN_TIME) (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Dori Laub, ‘An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival’, in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing* (Taylor and Francis, 1992), p. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Sibylle Schmidt, ‘Perpetrators’ Knowledge: What and How Can We Learn from Perpetrator Testimony?’, *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 1, no. 1 (2017), p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere in There* (Foxgate, 1975).

## Perpetrator Trauma?

While victim trauma is well theorised and comprehensively researched, the idea of perpetrator trauma is understudied and even contested.<sup>7</sup> In the same vein, there has been little sustained attention to representations of perpetrating violence during the Irish revolution, even in the cases of the most studied IRA authors. For example, Stephen Hopkins observes that ‘the fact that [Ernie] O’Malley had killed a fellow Irishman during the civil war has not been much discussed, either in his own memoir or in the critical analysis of his work’.<sup>8</sup> There also is a certain emphasis on victim trauma in Ireland’s decade of centenaries, indicated by the fact that Joe Duffy’s book on the child victims of the 1916 Rising is one of the bestselling titles of the commemoration period.<sup>9</sup> This interest in victim narratives perhaps highlights the tendency in popular, scholarly, and legal discourses to associate psychological trauma with victimhood.<sup>10</sup> Michael Rothberg, in his most recent study, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, contests this widespread conflation of the ‘category of victim’ with that of the ‘traumatized subject’ to the exclusion of perpetrator trauma.<sup>11</sup> The marginalisation of perpetrator trauma illustrates the ever-evolving and highly political understanding of trauma, whereby ‘only a limited number of specific kinds of experiences’ are validated ‘as traumatic’.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, perpetrator trauma does not line up with the standard definition of posttraumatic stress disorder, according to which the traumatic event is ‘outside the range of normal experience’. For perpetrators, on the other hand, the traumatic blow is ‘the outcome of a process that began long before that decisive, traumatic moment. It incorporates that moment into an ongoing narrative of duty, service, and redemption’.<sup>13</sup> Raya Morag argues that perpetrator trauma is defined thus by ‘the profound moral contradictions challenging the perpetrators rather than in

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<sup>7</sup> See Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 79. Leys also questions the idea of perpetrator trauma, Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 297.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Hopkins, ‘Irish History Unidealised’: The Politics of Republican Memoir and Narratives of the Defeated and Defiant’, in Karine Deslandes, Fabrice Mourlon, and Bruno Tribout (eds), *Civil War and Narrative: Testimony, Historiography, Memory* (Springer, 2017), p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Joe Duffy, *Children of the Rising: The Untold Story of the Young Lives Lost during Easter 1916* (Hachette UK, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Saira Mohamed, ‘Of Monsters and Men: Perpetrator Trauma and Mass Atrocity’, *Columbia Law Review* Vol. 115, No. 5 (June 2015), pp 1157–1216.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 90; Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Christa Schönfelder, *Wounds and Words: Childhood and Family Trauma in Romantic and Postmodern Fiction* (transcript Verlag, 2014), p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Bill Nichols, ‘Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator Trauma and Cinema’, *Studies in Documentary Film* 8, no. 1 (2 January 2014), pp 81–85.

their psychological disintegration or disturbing and intrusive memories'.<sup>14</sup> However, as will be explored in this chapter, the oft-cited trichotomy of perpetrators, bystanders and victims constantly collapses in civil war;<sup>15</sup> this produces a 'grey zone', where, as Breandán Mac Suibhne contends in the context of the Famine, 'judgement is, at best, not easy'.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the emphasis on victimhood, death, and martyrdom in dominant war memory, Joanna Bourke forcibly argued in her influential study *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (1991), that 'the characteristic act of men at war is not dying, it is killing'.<sup>17</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust similarly contended in his authoritative study of the American Civil War, that '[k]illing is battle's fundamental instrument and purpose'.<sup>18</sup> In the Irish revolution, references to 'plugging' Black and Tans are not uncommon, however, the language of killing during the civil war often demanded more vague and impersonal description. As Frances Flanagan asserts:

For both sides, the language used to describe killing was often carefully euphemized, using passive rather than active verbs. Policemen were not 'killed', but rather said to have 'died from bullet wounds while bearing arms on behalf of an alien enemy and Government'. IRA men died 'fighting for freedom'.<sup>19</sup>

The active sanitisation of the realities of carrying out violence is apparent from the earliest publications. Kitty O'Doherty was responsible for mellowing Dan Breen's 'bloodthirsty statements' in *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (1924).<sup>20</sup> Charlie Dalton's early memoir, *With the Dublin Brigade (1917–1921)*, edited perhaps by Moya Llewelyn Davis, was also criticised for its obfuscation of the details of perpetrating violence.<sup>21</sup> Speaking in the House of Lords, Lord Banbury of Southam protested that 'the author states that he was present and assisted in the murder of eleven English officers in their beds in Dublin on 21 November

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<sup>14</sup> Raya Morag, *Waltzing with Bashir: Perpetrator Trauma and Cinema* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933–1945* (Aaron Asher Books, 1992); Timothy Williams, 'Agency, Responsibility, and Culpability: The Complexity of Roles and Self-Representations of Perpetrators', *Journal of Perpetrator Research* 2, no. 1 (16 December 2018), p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Breandán Mac Suibhne, *Subjects Lacking Words?: The Gray Zone of the Great Famine* (Quinnipiac University Press, 2017); Breandán Mac Suibhne, *The End of Outrage: Post-Famine Adjustment in Rural Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (Granta Books, 2000 [1991]), p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008), p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Terry Clavin (Michael) Kevin O'Doherty, 'Dictionary of Irish Biography'.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade (1917–1921)* (Peter Davies, 1929).

1921, though he does not say that he fired any of the shots'.<sup>22</sup> This toning down of violence was also a feature of serialised newspaper memoirs, such as *Fighting Story: Told by the Men Who Made it*.<sup>23</sup> Equally, many veterans remained silent on the question of perpetrating violence. As Anne Dolan suggests, veterans gave accounts of 'their comrades' violence not their own', became reticent, and, even if they did speak, 'there were always certain words they would never bring themselves to say'.<sup>24</sup> If a child dared to ask if their parents were responsible for another's death, they could be told 'it was a question one must never ask'.<sup>25</sup>

The discomfort around the language of killing may indicate the fact that despite the expectation that it was normal for men to be violent in war, perpetrating violence was not always easy. Dave Grossman, a veteran of the Vietnam war, famously claimed that 'man is not by nature a killer',<sup>26</sup> while for Gilpin Faust, killing was 'the harder courage' required by combatants of the American Civil War.<sup>27</sup> While testimonies often shy away from the details of the act of committing violence, allusions to the need to attend confessions often subtly point to the moral dilemma of IRA activity. Although violence may have been restrained in Ireland in comparison to other conflicts internationally, IRA volunteers were often expected to carry out intimate, face-to-face violence.<sup>28</sup> The discomfort around killing is evident in the rituals of 'respectable killing' during the revolution. Killing with guns was preferred over stabbings or beatings; killing with a knife was considered to be improper. Snipers – although employed by both the republican and Free State sides – were generally maligned for the perceived callousness of their operations. Equally, the resistance to carrying out killings is well documented. Free State authorities rewarded officers with supplies of alcohol to counteract protests by soldiers who refused to participate in firing squads.<sup>29</sup> Yet according to the masculine military standard of war, this 'abhorrence of violence' was, as Bourke outlines,

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<sup>22</sup> Lord Banbury of Southam "With The Dublin Brigade (1917–1921)", 6 May 1931 vol 80 cc1036-44, Great Britain Parliament House of Lords, *Sessional Papers: Minutes of Proceedings – House of Lords*, 1930. Available at: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1931/may/06/with-the-dublin-brigade-1917-1921> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>23</sup> For example, it seems that Mossie Hartnett's earlier published testimonies printed anonymously as part of the Limerick Fighting Stories Series are edited and sanitised versions of his later published memoir, *Victory and Woe*.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Dolan, 'Killing in "the Good Old Irish Fashion"? Irish Revolutionary Violence in Context', *Irish Historical Studies* 44, no. 165 (May 2020), p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> Jody Allen Randolph, 'If no one wanted to remember': Margaret Kelly and the Lost Battalion', in Tina O'Toole, Gillian McIntosh, and Muireann Ó'Cinnéide, *Women Writing War: Ireland 1880–1922* (University College Dublin Press, 2016), p. 140.

<sup>26</sup> Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Little, Brown, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, p. 32.

<sup>28</sup> See Anne Dolan, 'Killing in "the Good Old Irish Fashion"?', pp 11–24.

<sup>29</sup> Timothy Murphy, 'The Government's Executions Policy During the Irish Civil War 1922–1923' (Unpublished PhD thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 2010), p. 199.

‘assumed to be a form of effeminacy’.<sup>30</sup> This is once again illustrated by the fact that Michael Collins sent his men to Dr. Robert Farnan who was a ladies’ doctor, but who could ‘cure men by merely talking to them’.<sup>31</sup> Such attempts to ‘cure’ men aimed to re-establish ‘nerve’ so that the men could continue their tasks. Within military and medical discourse, committing violence was not, therefore, considered to be a trigger of psychic injury; rather it was the revulsion of perpetrating violence that signified impotence, threatened masculinity and could lead to effeminate ‘nervous’ conditions.

## The Cult of Violence

Despite official discomfort with the realities of committing violence, there is an abundance of popular and fictionalised testimonies that reflect on perpetrating violence. Indeed, many cultural narratives of the revolution were steeped in violence, despite the toning down of early autobiographies, and despite the ostracisation of such ‘over-brutally done’ popular narratives from the literary canon.<sup>32</sup> As addressed in Chapter Two, Patrick Mulloy’s autobiographical novel, *Jackets Green*, was banned for its supposed immorality, yet the author felt its ‘cult of violence’ was accepted.<sup>33</sup> A. T. Walsh’s 1923 novel *Casey of the IRA* came in for criticism for the vile language attributed to the ‘Irish soldiers’, yet its ‘true’ descriptions of the protagonist’s determination ‘to make a kill’ does not appear to have been cause for commentary.<sup>34</sup> These representations are indicative of the ‘pleasure culture of war’ associated with imperial adventure books and comics from the 1870s.<sup>35</sup> In fact, the violence described by veterans of the revolution was often inflected by their consumption of Wild West dime novels; one veteran boasted in his witness statement of ‘[s]napshooting with revolvers with .22 ammunition while on the move in the cowboy fashion’.<sup>36</sup> Oral histories gathered by the Irish

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<sup>30</sup> Joanna Bourke, ‘Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of ‘Shell-Shocked’ Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914-39’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 1 (2000), pp 57–69.

<sup>31</sup> Colonel Eamon Broy, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 1285, 17 November 1955, p. 86.

<sup>32</sup> Seán Ó Faoláin, ‘Book Section’, *Ireland To-Day*, June 1936, p. 75.

<sup>33</sup> Des Hickey, ‘How Colonels almost took over!’, *Sunday Independent*, 22 September 1974, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup> Review of *Casey of the I.R.A.*, *The Irish Monthly*, 1924, Volume 52, p. 168. Walsh was a schoolteacher from Swinford, Co. Mayo and achieved a reputation as an author of revolutionary sketches in *The Freeman’s Journal* and *An tÓglach* considered to be based on ‘a substratum of fact’. *Evening Herald*, 30 June 1923, p. 5. An article entitled ‘Sidelights’ recounts amusing incidents during the war based on anecdotes the author ‘heard or came across firsthand’, *An tÓglach*, 21 June 1924, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Steven O’Connor, ‘The Pleasure Culture of War in Independent Ireland, 1922–1945’, *War in History* 22, no. 1 (2015), p. 70.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Moane, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S 896, 30 September 1953, p. 18.

Folklore Commission (another untapped source for the study of the revolution) also portray violence in exaggerated literary terms: in one account, the enemy of the Free State army is likened to ‘a savage beast-awaiting to devour its prey’.<sup>37</sup>

There was, nevertheless, an increased sanitisation of revolutionary violence, even in fiction. Anti-treatyite Thomas Irwin’s novel, *Benson’s Flying Column*, sparked debate in 1935.<sup>38</sup> The supposedly factual thriller follows the trajectory of the blood-thirsty IRA leader Davy Benson who sets out to avenge the death of his girlfriend, Lily O’Neill, a spy for the republican movement in Dublin castle.<sup>39</sup> As intended, the novel was read through the lens of Irwin’s revolutionary experience; one reviewer commented that he wrote ‘with exact knowledge of his subject’ and that his book will be ‘precious to many whose own memory of those days can corroborate his narrative’.<sup>40</sup> For some, however, the supposed authenticity of the novel did not chime with the characters’ violent impulses. Seán Connor is ‘the killer; the death-dealing avenger’ for whom ‘[n]othing was a consideration to him except to kill’.<sup>41</sup> M. J. McManus, editor of *The Irish Press* from 1931 to 1951, lamented that it gave the impression that ‘the men of the IRA enjoyed killing for killing’s sake’.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, P. J. K., reviewing in *The Irish Independent*, felt that Irwin’s novel did a ‘great disservice to the men of 1919–21’:

Blood gushes in streams from every page; Mr Irwin wades from one slaughterhouse to another with a kind of grim relish that must horrify the ecstasy-minded reader. Killing is the main theme: I have never before read a book in which there is so much slaughter.<sup>43</sup>

A reader disagreed, writing to the editor that in *Benson’s Flying Column*, ‘we see the old IRA as they really were [...] The very nature of the fight demanded cold-bloodedness, and a quick gunhand’.<sup>44</sup> The editor of Talbot Press, who had already sanitised aspects of the novel,

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<sup>37</sup> Tom Casey, ‘Civil War in Kerry’, National Folklore Collection, gathered in 1931. Iml 1271, l. A 124–51.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Irwin, the son of a Liberties’ trade union leader born in 1901, was active in the IRA Dublin Brigade from 1918–1923. He was an adjutant in the anti-treaty side during the battle of Dublin and engaged in a twelve-day hunger strike during his imprisonment. He later worked for forty years as a Dublin Corporation maintenance foreman, but he also wrote television plays. He was also involved with the Executive Committee of the Old Dublin Brigade of the IRA and issued a statement supporting Irishmen who joined the republican fight during the Spanish Civil War. Desmond Clarke and Stephen J. Brown (eds), *Ireland in Fiction: V. 2: A Guide to Irish Novels, Tales, Romances and Folklore* (Cork: Royal Carbery Books, 1985), p. 125; *Irish Press*, 17 December 1936, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> L. K., ‘Review of Thomas P. Irwin’s *Benson’s Flying Column*’, *The Irish book lover*, Vol. XXIV, p. 21, January–February 1936.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas P. Irwin, *Benson’s Flying Column* (Talbot Press, 1935), pp 125–126.

<sup>42</sup> M. J. M., ‘*Benson’s Flying Column* by Thomas P. Irwin’, *Irish Press*, 7 January 1936, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Raw Meat’, *Irish Independent*, 24 December 1935, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Book-worm, ‘To the Editor Irish Independent’, *Irish Independent*, 31 December 1935, p. 3.

also accepted its veracity: ‘I have a feeling that it is a very true picture of the actual happenings’.<sup>45</sup> Privately, he acknowledged it was a ‘blood-thirsty’ time, but that with the ‘passing of the years, the tendency will be to tone down the lurid aspects of the fighting’.<sup>46</sup>

Despite carefully meditated, sanitised accounts in newspapers and published memoirs, a number of veterans remained remarkably candid about their roles in the perpetration of violence. Famously, Dan Breen is quoted as having claimed that ‘I make no apologies for killing, and the only thing that I was ever really sorry for was the number that escaped’.<sup>47</sup> Michael Flannery similarly recounted that although he had not killed anybody during the civil war, he once put a gun to the head of a Free State soldier and regretted to that day ‘that it misfired’.<sup>48</sup> However, such claims may also hint at the expectations of exaggerated wartime masculinity. P. K. Horan’s autofictional civil war testimony, *The Flame of Youth*, reflects the tendency of certain anti-treaty prisoners in Gormanston camp to make false, hypermasculinised assertions regarding their ‘valiant’ exploits. One such internee, Hannigan, is mocked for his inflated claims of killing: ‘Landmines! You’d give anyone th’ stick t’ listen to y’ talkin’ about blowing up people. Would y’ know a landmine from a slot machine, Hannigan?’<sup>49</sup>

The scepticism towards the internees’ accounts again underscores the fictionality of self-representation. Indeed, it is well documented that representing the act of killing often led veterans to the liminal spaces between fact and fiction. Frances Houghton’s study of Second World War veteran memoirs suggests that fantasy enabled soldiers to distance themselves from their actions, as it was ‘far easier to carry out acts of extreme violence when the foe was in some manner dehumanised and mechanised in their imaginations’.<sup>50</sup> Bourke contends that war testimonies of killing are often ‘highly fanciful’ ‘yarns’, ‘moulded to appeal to an audience’, and fitted into the ‘conventions of combat narratives’.<sup>51</sup> For Bourke, ‘[s]uch forms of dissociation were psychologically useful. By imagining themselves as participating in a fantasy, men could find a language which avoided facing the unspeakable horror not only of dying, but of meting out death’.<sup>52</sup> Dominic Thorpe too advocates for creative practices to

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<sup>45</sup> The author was instructed to considerably shorten his first manuscript, entitled *The Vow*, and provided ‘a much more satisfactory finish than the previous one which I thought rather gruesome’. 26 August 1935, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager’s Correspondence, 1048/1/137.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to M. J. MacManus, 9 December 1935, National Archives of Ireland, Talbot Press Archive, Manager’s Correspondence, 1048/1/139.

<sup>47</sup> See *My Fight For Irish Freedom*, Scéal Dan Breen, Documentary, TG4, aired Wed, 12 Jan 2011 - 21.30.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Patrick Maume, ‘Michael Flannery’, *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

<sup>49</sup> P. K. Horan, ‘The Flame of Youth’, *Irish Christian Advocate*, 24 August 1928, p. 408.

<sup>50</sup> Frances Houghton, *The Veterans’ Tale: British Military Memoirs of the Second World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 166.

<sup>51</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 10.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, p. 28.

understand perpetration as, '[a]rt can place us in close proximity to the idea and the actuality of perpetration and perpetrators and what that might mean individually and collectively, internally and externally, in ways that everyday life can resist very often'.<sup>53</sup> This resort to fiction is also associated with emotional release, in that perpetrator narratives are 'related for their cathartic and consolatory function rather than as an objective recital of 'experience''.<sup>54</sup>

## Intertextual Guests of the Nation

Despite an emphasis on the 'unblemished' heroism of the revolution, the psychological legacies of committing violence are well represented in early autofiction of the conflict. Bourke observes that the silences at official levels regarding killing were often contrasted by the loquaciousness of perpetrators themselves: 'While civilians in the past and present have been anxious to exonerate servicemen from responsibility for their actions in battle, combatants themselves were often anxious to accept their own agency and to judge and be judged for their deeds'.<sup>55</sup> Once again, hybridised narratives provided a space for this. The protagonist in Frank Carty's rather mild autobiographical novel *The Irish Volunteer* ruminates, 'The fact is we are killing. Doesn't that put us in the position of inflicting rather than enduring?'; this comment seems like a rejoinder to Terence MacSwiney's much cited quote, 'It is not those who can inflict the most but those who can endure the most who will conquer'.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Thorpe, Dominic, 'Artist in Residence Talk: Talking About Perpetrators'. *Memory Studies Association* (blog). Available at: <https://www.memorystudiesassociation.org/lecture-link/artist-residence-talk-dominic-thorpe-talking-perpetrators/> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>54</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 4. This imaginative aspect of perpetrator accounts has not been given the consideration it merits in studies of the Irish revolution. Anne Dolan's widely-cited article of the testimonies of IRA men active on the morning of Bloody Sunday on 21 November 1920 – when thirteen British soldiers and officers were assassinated in their beds — is one of few studies to consider 'killing and its effects on a band of largely untrained young men in a guerrilla war'. Yet Dolan's excellent study, while citing Bourke's scholarship, fails to fully acknowledge that such testimonies should be expected to be, as Bourke argues, 'contradictory, consolatory and often fantastical'. Indeed, as Eve Morrison contends, Dolan risks judging the men for their 'disturbing' actions; for not mentioning 'any blood', or for not admitting 'that mistakes were made, that the wrong men were shot'. As Morrison puts it, 'Anne Dolan's decontextualised narrative analysis of the Bureau of Military History's Bloody Sunday testimony is original and powerful in its exposition, but assumes rather than proves that the explicitness of the men's descriptions of violence provides insight into their emotional psychology (with a lack of gruesome detail read as moral failure or dishonesty)'. Eve Morrison, 'Witnessing the Republic: the Ernie O'Malley Notebook Interviews and the Bureau of Military History Compared', in Cormac O'Malley (ed.), *Modern Ireland and Revolution: Ernie O'Malley in Context* (Irish Academic Press, 2016), p. 139.

<sup>55</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Francis Carty, *The Irish Volunteer* (J. M. Dent & Sons, Limited, 1932), p. 168.

Tadhg Gahan also philosophises on the ethics of killing in his semi-autobiographical novel, *Tom Creagan* (as discussed in Chapter Four), which perhaps reflects the author's own decision to resign from the Volunteers. These popular literary narratives also point to the mental turmoil evoked by perpetrating violence that was less acknowledged in military and medical settings. In Walsh's writings, Captain Murphy finds himself in a never-ending cycle of guilt, as '[h]e hated killing, and yet no man in the county had been in more fights than he had'. Every 'job' led to the planning of another, and the narrator recalls seeing the column leader 'fall to pieces with nerves for hours' after carrying out a successful job.<sup>57</sup> In Eimar O'Duffy's *The Wasteland*, after Bernard Lascelle kills a soldier, he experiences a period of 'madness and delusion where he imagines himself covered in rats and starts beating the air with a boot'.<sup>58</sup> In Jake Wynne's supposedly autobiographical novel *Ugly Brew*, Martin also becomes 'oppressed [...] by a mood of gloom' after his involvement in the execution of a spy.<sup>59</sup> He imagines that he might have had a 'nervous breakdown' or gone mad, but that 'fresh incidents were being forced in upon his attention'.<sup>60</sup> Continuous activity and further violence was thus a distraction from 'breaking down'.

The post-1923 cultural climate is overwhelmingly characterised by 'post-revolutionary disillusionment'; a term which 'entered into almost every appraisal of Ireland's literary temperament by the Irish writers and critics on the scene in the middle twenties'.<sup>61</sup> This emphasis on 'disillusionment' must be considered in the context of perpetrator trauma. According to Alan Gibbs in his influential study, perpetrator trauma emerges from '[a]n insidious accretion of guilt coupled with *disillusionment* about the cause being fought' (my emphasis).<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Frank O'Connor's short story 'Guests of the Nation', which is somewhat of an 'urtext' in modern Irish culture, expressly captures the effect of violence on the perpetrator.<sup>63</sup> The story records the execution of two British soldiers by republican officers, underscoring the sense of camaraderie between the prisoners and their captors. The story's conclusion highlights the transformative, traumatic influence of the execution on IRA rebel, Bonaparte.

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<sup>57</sup> A. T. Walsh, 'The Stuff of Dreams: A Story of the Anglo-Irish War of 1920–21', *An tÓglach*, 20 October 1923.

<sup>58</sup> Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution*, p. 65.

<sup>59</sup> Jake Wynne, *Ugly Brew* (Chatto & Windus, 1936), p. 135.

<sup>60</sup> Wynne, *Ugly Brew*, p. 138.

<sup>61</sup> John Zneimer, *The Literary Vision of Liam O'Flaherty* (Syracuse University Press, 1970), p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> Alan Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 169.

<sup>63</sup> Paul Delaney, 'Rising Again': Revision, Trauma, and Frank O'Connor's 'Guests of the Nation', *New Hibernia Review* 23, no. 3 (6 December 2019), p. 39.

Noble says he saw everything ten times the size, as though there were nothing in the whole world but that little patch of bog with the two Englishmen stiffening into it, but with me it was as if the patch of bog where the Englishmen were was a million miles away, and even Noble and the old woman, mumbling behind me, and the birds and the bloody stars were all far away, and I was somehow very small and very lost and lonely like a child astray in the snow. And anything that happened me afterwards, I never felt the same about it again.<sup>64</sup>

Published in January 1931 in the *Atlantic Monthly*, O'Connor's story gave the title to his collection published later that year. *Guests of the Nation* led to O'Connor being acclaimed as one of 'the best story-writers that Ireland has produced in the past quarter-century'.<sup>65</sup> The title story, in particular, was regarded as 'supreme in its successful re-creation of true incidents'.<sup>66</sup>

Like the writings considered in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, O'Connor's writings seem to have had a reparative function. Many of the stories in his 'war book' are fictionalised renderings of his revolutionary experiences.<sup>67</sup> However, the title story of *Guests of the Nation* 'came from someone else'; O'Connor attributed it to an account he overheard while interned in Gormanston Camp during the civil war.<sup>68</sup> Whether or not O'Connor witnessed or participated in such an execution as described, he nevertheless seems to have shared with the protagonist the sense of being haunted by the past. The cold-hearted IRA leader, Jeremiah Donovan, even shares the same name as the author, Michael Donovan.<sup>69</sup> O'Connor also found himself drawn to rework the story throughout his life and produced no less than four different versions. Paul Delaney relates this re-writing to a sort of traumatic wounding, contending that

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<sup>64</sup> Frank O'Connor, *Guests of the Nation* (Macmillan, 1931), p. 19.

<sup>65</sup> P. C. T., 'Review of Frank O'Connor's *Guests of the Nation*', *Irish Book Lover*, Vol. XIX, November-December 1931, pp 179-180.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> For example, 'Ambush' relates to an occasion during which the author, Seán O'Faoláin, Seán Hendrick and Vincent O'Leary, tried to ambush a Free State army convoy. James H. Matthews, *Voices: A Life of Frank O'Connor* (Atheneum, 1983), p. 69. 'Freedom' is also believed to be 'based on his experience of the Irish Civil War', although 'set in the war for independence against England a few years earlier'. Richard Harp, 'Frank O'Connor's stories: epiphanies of the heart', Robert C. Evans and Richard Harp, *Frank O'Connor: New Perspectives* (Locust Hill Press, 1998), p. 77.

<sup>68</sup> According to Morrison, 'Guests of the Nation' may have been based on either of two actual incidents. One is the West Cork IRA's execution of two captured Essex Regiment soldiers, Percy Taylor and Thomas Watling, in December 1920. The other incident took place in July 1921 in east Kerry, when the IRA shot John Steer (often referred to as 'Stay') and George Motley of the East Lancashire Regiment. Eve Morrison 'Hauntings of the Irish Revolution: Veterans and Memory of the Independence Struggle and Civil War', in *Irish Studies and the Dynamics of Memory: Transitions and Transformations*, Marguerite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack and Ruud van den Beuken, ed. (Peter Lang: 2017), p. 99. However, the story O'Connor heard in Gormanston may have come from the folkloric tradition and may have predated the revolution. As Matthews notes, in one version of the story, the executions may have been ordered by the Fenian leader O'Donovan Rossa. Matthews, *Voices: A Life of Frank O'Connor*, p. 70.

<sup>69</sup> Delaney, 'Rising Again', p. 47.

‘the multiple copies’ point to ‘a successful attempt by O’Connor to get the experience of the revolutionary years off his chest and so exorcise the spirits and the torment’.<sup>70</sup> Aside from the various re-writes, O’Connor’s later writings are also inflected by his influential story. His description of the death of Michael Collins in his biography *The Big Fellow* (1937) ‘echoes’ the conclusion to ‘Guests of the Nation’.<sup>71</sup> Critics too have observed that the opening volume of O’Connor’s autobiography, *An Only Child*, strongly reflect the phrasing of ‘Guests of the Nation’.<sup>72</sup>

If the story continued to haunt O’Connor, the execution plot in ‘Guests of the Nation’ also became a motif that had profound intertextual ramifications on later testimonies. The story’s cultural currency expanded when ‘Guests of the Nation’ appeared as a silent film in 1934, scripted by Mary Manning and directed by Denis Johnston. O’Connor claimed that W. B. Yeats was among the first to notice the strong influence of the story, writing that he had seen that ‘the Censorship Board has banned the book by So-and-So – the fellow who stole your story’.<sup>73</sup> O’Connor remarked in his posthumous autobiography that ‘it has been stolen so often since that even the newspapers comment on it, but Yeats was the very first to notice the plagiarism’.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the scenario is replayed in fiction and in particular in a number of plays staged in the early 1930s. IRA veteran Mícheál Ó Siochfhradha’s documents the execution of two British officers in Co. Kerry’ in his 1931 play *Deire an Chunntais*; both the prisoners, in their refusal to accept unpatriotic conditions of release, and their executioners, are presented as victims of ‘rialacha fuara airm’.<sup>75</sup> Similarly A. P. Fanning’s play *Vigil*, performed in the Abbey Theatre on 24 October 1932, records the final moments of three republican prisoners executed by their Free State captors who lament that ‘we never thought things would turn out this way’.<sup>76</sup> For civil war prisoner, Rosamond Jacob, *Vigil* ‘brought home to me with sudden clearness one of the main causes (so it appeared to me) why cruelty and violence reign with so much success in countries where an enlightened code of ethics is generally known and professed’.<sup>77</sup> Jacob’s

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53. Here Delaney is citing James McKeon, *Frank O’Connor: A Life* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1998), p. 80.

<sup>71</sup> Nathan Wallace, ‘The Importance of Being Ernie O’Malley in Ken Loach’s *The Wind That Shakes The Barley*’, O’Malley, *Modern Ireland and Revolution*, p. 68.

<sup>72</sup> Robert C. Evans and Michael Probst, ‘Comparisons and Contrasts: ‘Fact’ and ‘Fiction’ in Frank O’Connor’s ‘Guests of the Nation’ and *An Only Child*’, Evans and Harp, *Frank O’Connor*, pp 189–195.

<sup>73</sup> Frank O’Connor, *My Father’s Son* (Syracuse University Press, 1999 [1968]), p. 34.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> ‘cold laws of the army’. Mícheál Ó Siochfhradha, *Deire an Chunntais: Dráma Aon-Mhire* (Oifig Díolta Foillseacháin Rialtais, 1932); cited in Philip O’Leary, *Gaelic Prose in the Irish Free State: 1922–1939* (Penn State Press, 2010), p. 328.

<sup>76</sup> A. P. Fanning, *Vigil: A Play in One Act* (P.J. Bourke, 1961).

<sup>77</sup> Rosamond Jacob, ‘Letter of the Month. The Right to Kill. Reflections after Seeing *Vigil* (by A. P. Fanning) at the Abbey’, *Ireland to-day*, Vol. II, No. 4, April 1937, pp 58–60.

precise observations pre-empt Hannah Arendt's 'banality of evil', as she observes that legislature 'takes such murders entirely out of the realm of crime or violence, making them acts of loyal obedience to the State'.<sup>78</sup>

'Guests of the Nation' not only informed fictionalised accounts, it also came to influence first-hand testimonies. Perhaps the most famous example of the intertextual afterlife of 'Guests of the Nation' is found in Ernie O'Malley's memoir *On Another Man's Wound*, published five years after O'Connor's story. As Roy Foster notes, 'the incident of killing a captured British soldier in 'Guests of the Nation' bears a very close resemblance to an event in *On Another Man's Wound* in Tipperary in 1921.'<sup>79</sup> As in 'Guests of the Nation', O'Malley emphasises the strong connections between the prisoners and their executioners. He highlights the dignity with which the British officers are treated and establishes an emotional connection with them, as he, too, feels in close proximity to death: 'I was putting myself in the place of the men inside. My turn might come, too, and soon. It seemed easier to face one's own execution than to have to shoot others.'<sup>80</sup> Nathan Wallace further asserts that O'Malley's 'blunt description of violence followed by a poetic evocation of the landscape' is an imitation of O'Connor's writing. Indeed, in O'Malley's memoirs, the disruption and horror of the execution scene is narratively redressed by the continuity of the landscape:

The volley crashed sharply. The three fell to the ground; their arms twitched. The quartermaster put his revolver to each of their foreheads in turn and fired. The bodies lay still on the green grass. We stood to attention. Then slowly we went up the hill across country, making for the centre. None of us spoke until we had crossed a good many fields where wind had snaked the rye grass.<sup>81</sup>

In O'Connor's earlier story, 'Guests of the Nation', the trauma of burying the bodies is similarly projected onto the natural world:

I don't remember much about the burying, but that it was worse than all the rest, because we had to carry the warm corpses a few yards before we sunk them in the windy bog. It was all

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<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>79</sup> R. F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923* (Penguin UK, 2014), p. 375.

<sup>80</sup> Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Roberts Rinehart, 2001), p. 371.

<sup>81</sup> O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p. 374; Wallace, 'The Importance Of Being Ernie O'Malley', p. 68.

mad lonely, with only a bit of lantern between ourselves and the pitch-blackness, and birds hooting and screeching all round disturbed by the guns.<sup>82</sup>

This is reinforced at the story's conclusion as the narrator 'stood at the door, watching the stars and listening to the damned shrieking of the birds'.<sup>83</sup> For Wallace, this description of the countryside as murderous is a distinct trait of O'Connor and is evidence of his rebuttal of the romanticism of Daniel Corkery.<sup>84</sup>

The strong appeal of O'Connor's motif among veterans may not be solely connected to aesthetic concerns, however. The construction of 'empathic links with the enemy' is widely identified as a key enabling rhetorical strategy in perpetrator testimonies.<sup>85</sup> Bourke argues that 'personalising the foe could be crucial to the moral and emotional well-being of combatants and formed a buffer against numbing brutality'.<sup>86</sup> Meanwhile, Houghton contends that memoirists present 'intensively personalised images of their enemy and insist that emotional closeness existed between opponents'.<sup>87</sup> O'Connor's 'Guests of the Nation' thus became a helpful script which veterans could mobilise in order to articulate their own experience. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson observe, '*In telling their stories, narrators take up models of identity that are culturally available. And by adopting ready-made narrative templates to structure experiential history they take up culturally designated subjectivities*' (emphasis in original).<sup>88</sup>

### The Cost of Silence in Úna Troy's *Dead Star's Light*

Given the prominence of the 'Guests of the Nation' motif, it is perhaps not surprising that George Lennon too deployed O'Connor's famous motif to address his own experience of killing. As Terence O'Reilly contends, Lennon's play *Down by the Glenside* (1952) is 'part of a particular genre of which the most famous example is Frank O'Connor's short story 'Guests

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<sup>82</sup> O'Connor, *Guests of the Nation*, p. 18.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>84</sup> Wallace, 'The Importance of Being Ernie O'Malley', p. 68.

<sup>85</sup> Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*, p. 183.

<sup>86</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> Houghton, *The Veterans' Tale*, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 9.

of the Nation'.<sup>89</sup> The play centres on the relationship between IRA commandant Henry Rogan and captured British soldier, Robert Harley, whose execution Rogan is ordered to oversee. However, while Yeats may have considered this yet another rip-off of O'Connor's finely-wrought short story, it is more likely that O'Connor's story provided Lennon with a fictional formula in which to insert his own traumatic experience. In March 1921, Lennon oversaw a 'council of war' order to execute local RIC sergeant Michael Hickey, who had been taken prisoner during an ambush, but who could not be released as he knew the identities of his IRA captors.<sup>90</sup>

However, Lennon's intertextual re-working of O'Connor's play in 1952 was not the first fictional rendering of his revolutionary experience of perpetrating violence. Indeed, Úna Troy's novel, *Dead Star's Light* (1938) – published under the pseudonym of Elizabeth Connor – includes the character of John Davern whose life trajectory strongly echoes that of Lennon. Not only did Troy imaginatively recreate Lennon's experience, her novel and its later stage adaptation, *The Dark Road* (1947), provide one of the most sustained literary treatments of the far-reaching consequences of perpetrator trauma in the opening decades of the Free State.<sup>91</sup> *Dead Star's Light* opens as four respected members of the community – a doctor, a solicitor, a banker, and his nephew, a bank clerk – accidentally run over a 'travelling man from God knows where' as they drive home from a public house on a dark Christmas night in 1919.<sup>92</sup> The solicitor, Ignatius Ross, encourages the men to throw the body into a nearby mineshaft in the Slievcrag mountains and subsequently blackmails his three accomplices – one of whom is Davern – to further his own career and financial goals.<sup>93</sup>

Troy's novel also addresses the implications of committing violence during the revolution through Davern, the Lennon surrogate character. Troy had first-hand experience of

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<sup>89</sup> O'Reilly, *Rebel Heart*, p. 241.

<sup>90</sup> Pat McCarthy, *The Irish Revolution, 1912–23: Waterford* (Four Courts Press, 2015), pp 80–81.

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Connor, 'Typescript *The Dark Road*, a play in three acts with prologue and epilogue', NLI, Úna Troy Papers, Ms 35,687. The stage adaptation, *The Dark Road*, ran in the Abbey from 12 – 31 May 1947 and experienced 'well deserved success'. The plot of *The Dark Road* faithfully retraces that of the novel, although, as O'Reilly notes, the anti-clerical opinions of the characters are omitted from the play. Furthermore, the stage version concludes differently from the novel. The novel ends on a note of optimism: Ross's death, while bringing financial ruin on his own family, brings relief to his accomplices who feel they can finally move on. Davern and Katherine descend towards Kilvane from Slievcrag to start a new life. In the final act of the play, the four accomplices revisit the site of their crime, the Slievcrag mineshaft, hoping to confront Ross with evidence of his fraud. However, Ross throws himself into the mineshaft, escaping financial disgrace and leaving his accomplices '[i]n the same bloody mess as where we started'.

<sup>92</sup> Elizabeth Connor, *Dead Star's Light* (Methuen & Company Limited London, 1938), p. 8.

<sup>93</sup> For local readers, the plot clearly suggested the contentious disappearance of postman Larry Griffin in Stradbally, County Waterford, on Christmas Day 1929, and whose body was purportedly discarded in a mineshaft near Bunmahon. See Fachtna Ó Drisceoil, *The Missing Postman: What Really Happened to Larry Griffin?* (Mercier Press Ltd, 2011).

witnessing ambushes during the revolution from her home in Fermoy, Co. Cork, which was flanked by a British military barracks.<sup>94</sup> Her husband, Dr. Joseph C. Walsh, also served as medical doctor in the Déise Flying Column under George Lennon. Walsh's revolutionary experiences impacted him throughout his later life and Patrick Maume suggests there 'are hints in Troy's work that her husband's alcoholism originated in a deep misanthropy deriving from civil war experiences'.<sup>95</sup> However, rather than evoke her husband's experience, it seems that Troy chose to base her protagonist on the column's renowned leader, George Lennon. The fictional protagonist shares many of the IRA man's distinct characteristics. A young, idealistic commander of a local flying column, he leads the anti-treaty side during the 'battle of Fordtown'. This is reminiscent of Lennon's involvement in the siege of Waterford in July 1922. Moreover, both characters – real and imagined – emigrate to America in the aftermath of the conflict and arouse suspicion on their return due to their supposed communist and anti-clerical beliefs. Both also pen articles supporting the republican side in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>96</sup>

The novel's title, *Dead Star's Light*, refers to the protagonist's disillusion with the revolution as he realises that he had been guided by 'the light of a dead star'.<sup>97</sup> Although the struggle for independence was 'the happiest [time] of his life',<sup>98</sup> Davern's optimism is soured by the civil war; it evoked 'a hate which would endure beyond this generation and take root in the next'.<sup>99</sup> This dismay is accompanied by a gradual disavowal of violent methods, as Davern shrinks from those soldiers on his own side who were 'avid with the blood-lust' who 'would go forth to a killing with level eyes gleaming'.<sup>100</sup> This leads him to oppose the military systems which facilitate such slaughter:

... when he saw men blown to limbless trunks, he saw dust thicken from reddened flesh, when he saw sprawled bodies whose sightless gaze held an eternal questioning, he loved his enemies with a fierce pity and hated the system that made man slay man.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ann. M. Butler, 'Úna Troy – Author', Copper Coast Geopark, 17 April 2017. Available at: <https://coppercoastgeopark.com/una-troy-author/> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>95</sup> Patrick Maume, 'Úna Troy', Dictionary of Irish Biography.

<sup>96</sup> Connor, *The Dark Road*, p. 48. Historian Donal Brady questions the extent to which Davern is moulded on Lennon. However, there are significant similarities between Lennon's biography and the life trajectory of the fictional Davern. Lennon also believed that the character of Davern was based on his experience.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid*, p. 239.

<sup>98</sup> Connor, *Dead Star's Light*, p. 77.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid*, p. 127.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid*, p. 78.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p. 78.

Nevertheless, Davern cannot escape from his complicity in the violence that he grows to detest. In a kaleidoscopic passage redolent of Smithson's textualisation of traumatic memory in *The Marriage of Nurse Harding*, Troy indicates how these instances of perpetrating violence are ingrained in Davern's memory and form a key part of his identity:

Only some things were imprinted on his memory forever, small sharp cameos framed in keener sensation; his first ambush, the jar of the rifle against his shoulder and a figure twisting and falling in the road, while *he reloaded with the calm and remote satisfaction of one who has made a successful shy at a coco-nut*; hurrying at night behind hedges, from a farmhouse, while the searchlights of a military lorry beat down the lane after him; a shot, and one long, shrill scream, and in a silence that followed, the clear call of a bird, like a mocking echo... (my emphasis)<sup>102</sup>

Like in O'Connor's story, revolutionary violence is once again shadowed by the natural world. Davern's 'calm and remote' satisfaction after his involvement in what appears to be an execution, as though he were playing a children's game of target, is complicated by his later acknowledgement of the psychological consequences of complicity in another's death. As he contends, '[e]very one carries his own portion of blame for the evil he does and no one can share another's...'<sup>103</sup> The four men who disposed of the unknown corpses eke out an existence between life and death alongside their victim, as though they were seated 'at a table... three ghosts... and a blown, distorted body floated in slime...'<sup>104</sup> The banker, Robert Bolger, is plagued by hallucinations and 'constantly beset at night by unpleasant dreams where broken shapes fell forever into the darkness and voices cried aloud the deed...'<sup>105</sup>

Troy, the wife of a doctor, explicitly addresses the embodied consequences of these traumas. Although the men contend that telling their wives of their deed would be too much of a 'shock' to their 'delicate heart[s]', their conspiracy of silence comes to affect them emotionally as well as physically.<sup>106</sup> Like Smithson, Troy underscores throughout the extent to which the 'mind affects the body'<sup>107</sup>. Bolger finds 'a constipated mind far more upsetting than a constipated bowel' and suffers a premature stroke, while Dr. Mahon takes to drinking 'for

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<sup>102</sup> Connor, *Dead Star's Light*, p. 78.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid*, p. 49.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid*, p. 59.

<sup>106</sup> Connor, *Dead Star's Light*, p. 9.

<sup>107</sup> Connor, *The Dark Road*, p. 23.

life, for sanity' and 'oblivion'.<sup>108</sup> Their guilt also plays out in their interpersonal relationships. Dr. Mahon's marriage essentially breaks down. His wife struggles to come to terms with her husband's drinking, and is haunted by her own sense of failure 'as a lover and a comrade' due to infertility.<sup>109</sup> Her health deteriorates, but her husband realised that her sickness was feigned, as 'dishonesty was being translated into hypochondria'.<sup>110</sup> Julia Ross, too, struggles to sleep beside a man who was 'almost a murderer' and looked at her husband 'like a beaten dog'.<sup>111</sup> Bolger's failure to uphold the expectations of hardened masculinity impacts his sexual functions and leads to an inability to 'obtain value from the well-chosen objects of his desire'.<sup>112</sup> His knowledge that he 'had failed before a woman was a deadly blow to pride'.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, Troy points to the possibility of 'working through' such trauma. Davern's emotional baggage eases when he is forced to explain his past actions to his fiancée, Katherine, the daughter of Ignatius Ross. This divulgence brings the couple closer together: Davern 'felt a great, an overwhelming relief, as if the last shadow of that poor tattered ghost had left him forever'.<sup>114</sup> Although the characters routinely try to suppress language – 'all our talk will never undo what we did'<sup>115</sup> – Davern comes to realise that 'speech was healing'.<sup>116</sup> By the end of the novel, Davern and Katherine flee to the summit of Slievcrag. Looking down over the town of Kilvane, they decide to remain in Ireland rather than emigrate to America, despite the community's suspicion and outright scorn of Davern's politics and anti-clerical beliefs, and in spite of the shame brought upon Katherine by her now deceased father's immoral business deals. The site of the crime has become Davern's place of solace.

Connor's novel strongly illustrates not only the psychological and bodily consequences of trauma, but also the broader consequences of men's mental illness on women in the domestic world. Echoing the themes addressed in Chapter Three, she draws on gothic conventions to highlight the haunting trauma of the past, yet foregrounds the possibility of healing through narrative and speech. Yet despite Connor's perceptive take on the culture of silence in post-independence Ireland, the novel was met with little critical success, perhaps reflecting an unease with its 'modern psychological manner'.<sup>117</sup> Philip Rooney, reviewing in the *Sunday*

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<sup>108</sup> Connor, *Dead Star's Light*, p. 29, p. 93.

<sup>109</sup> Connor, *The Dark Road*, p. 21.

<sup>110</sup> Connor, *Dead Star's Light*, p. 141.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*, 23, p. 40.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid*, p. 113.

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

<sup>114</sup> *ibid*, p. 318.

<sup>115</sup> Connor, *The Dark Road*, p. 24.

<sup>116</sup> Connor, *Dead Star's Light*, p. 318.

<sup>117</sup> 'New Play at the Abbey', *Irish Press*, 13 May 1947, p. 4.

*Independent*, was not convinced by the depictions of contemporary life. He felt Davern was ‘less a character than a peg on which the author hangs her own savagely disillusioned ideas of present-day Ireland. All the outworn notions of the anti-clerical rag-bag are brought out anew to deck this embittered idealist—a lapsed Catholic, of course, as the tradition demands’.<sup>118</sup> A reviewer in *The Guardian* seemed to have missed the doubts cast on revolutionary violence and observed that Davern ‘made atonement for his sin of complicity in disposing of a dead body by joining the I.R.A. and doing some real, satisfactory killing on his own account’.<sup>119</sup> While *Dead’s Light Star* did not make the censors’ list, like Troy’s first novel, *Mount Prospect* (1931) which alluded to abortion and contraception, it nevertheless provoked outcry. The Walsh family were effectively excommunicated from their parish of Saint Peter and Paul’s in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, as the local parish priest was ‘truly appalled and grieved by the anti-religious and anti-clerical spirit’ of the novel.<sup>120</sup>

### George Lennon’s Intertextual Explorations of Perpetrator Trauma

In *Dead Star’s Light*, Davern is so overwhelmed by witnessing the dead man’s body being thrown down the mineshaft that he experiences the event in a state of dissociation, as though he were an outside observer or the audience of a play:

He tried not to look at the thing on the road, but his eyes were beyond the control of his will. The scene before him was an act in a play, a picture thrown on the screen of night, and he must be audience.<sup>121</sup>

Lennon himself also chose to retreat to the genre of drama to revisit his revolutionary experience – at a distance. That Davern must be the audience to his own crime also metafictionally points to the difficulties in finding an accommodating audience for perpetrator narratives. Indeed, Lennon’s 1952 television play *Down By the Glen Side* was never produced;

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<sup>118</sup> Philip Rooney, ‘Caricature of Irish Life’, *Sunday Independent*, 13 March 1938, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> *The Guardian*, 4 March 1938, p. 7.

<sup>120</sup> W. Byrne, SS Peter and Paul’s, Clonmel, 18 March 1938, Úna Troy Papers, NLI, Ms 35,686 (2).

<sup>121</sup> Connor, *Dead Star’s Light*, p. 7.

however, he sent a copy of the play to Úna Troy's daughter, Janet Helleris (1932-2002).<sup>122</sup> Could it be that Troy's fictionalised treatment of his life encouraged Lennon to render his wartime experience into imaginative writing? Troy's novel touches on many of the themes later developed in Lennon's own testimonial writings: the moral dilemma behind the soldiery duty to kill, the possibility of relief brought on by killing, and the complex corporeal and emotional manifestations brought on by the silencing of perpetrator trauma connected to the difficulty of finding a confirming listenership. Lennon also had a strong attachment to *Dead Star's Light*, which had pride of place in the family home; Ivan Lennon recalls that the novel was referred to as 'the book about your father'.<sup>123</sup>

By the time of the composition of *Down By the Glen Side*, Lennon was living in Rochester, New York. He initially emigrated from Ireland in 1927, but returned for a decade from 1936 during which time he served as an Inspector of the Irish Tourist Board and was Secretary of the All Ireland Old IRA Men's Association. Lennon settled again in the United States from 1946, which perhaps precluded him from submitting a statement to the Bureau of Military History, which operated between 1947 and 1957. However, he addressed his revolutionary experience in both his play, *Down by the Glenside* (1952) and his hybridised memoir *Trauma in Time* (c. 1971). Both testimonies are arguably evidence of the 'search for a spiritual inner peace' that preoccupied Lennon throughout his adult life.<sup>124</sup>

*Down by the Glenside* centres on the Irish commandant Henry Rogan who is tasked with 'entertaining' a captured English captain, Robert Harley, who is described as a 'regular swank'. Harley delights in the treatment he is afforded, enjoying the tea from mountain water which is far superior to 'the awful muck' provided by the army.<sup>125</sup> The relationship of mutual understanding that develops between Rogan and Harley clearly echoes 'Guests of the Nation'. Rogan is interested in gaining insights into military strategy from the British soldier; he studiously examines Kinsman's *The Training of the Infantry Officer* and reminisces about the Irish brigade at the Battle of Fontenay in 1793. However, while the IRA commandant hopes to imitate imperial military strategy, the British soldier, Harley, is repulsed by war, having experienced those 'ghastly trenches'.<sup>126</sup> Along with his wife, Mildred, he intends to produce and perform an anti-war play at his local parsonage hall. The play features an army captain

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<sup>122</sup> George Lennon, 'Television play manuscript, *Down By the Glen Side: An Original Television Play 'Live'*, September, 1952 (To Janet)', George Lennon, 31 Grassmere Park, Rochester 12, N.Y., NLI, Úna Troy, Ms 35,699 (1).

<sup>123</sup> Email from Ivan Lennon to the author, 20 January 2020.

<sup>124</sup> Lennon, *Lennons In Time*, p. 123.

<sup>125</sup> Lennon, 'Television play manuscript, *Down By the Glen Side*', p. 29.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid*, p. 37.

who oversees the gibbeting of a young man, but who experiences a change of heart as he hears the cries of the executed man's mother. The captain comes to reject his profession of 'killing' and agrees that 'we need a new kind of courage. More like woman's. Dealing with life not death'.<sup>127</sup>

The plot of *Down By the Glen Side* metafictionally emulates Harley's planned pacifist production. When Rogan is expected to execute his new acquaintance, he finds his 'humanity and generosity are in wild conflict with what he conceives to be his duty'.<sup>128</sup> Initially, he is unable to disobey military command and save his comrade, lamenting 'I would give almost anything – but – I cannot...'<sup>129</sup> However, when the hideout is ambushed, Rogan drops his gun from Harley's temple and flees. He bids his prisoner a 'Goodbye, English Officer' before coming under bullet fire from the ambush party. Anne Whitehead identifies intertextuality as a key aesthetic feature of trauma fiction, as characters' re-enactment of the mistakes of their literary predecessors construes a 'motif of an inescapable trajectory of fate, which [...] bears comparison with Freud's elaboration of the repetition compulsion'.<sup>130</sup> However, Lennon consciously subverts Frank O'Connor's canonical source text: Rogan goes against the military order, avoids carrying out the execution and saves the life of his prisoner. This departure from O'Connor's source text thus creates 'a curious and undecidable wavering between departure and return' that suggests that 'the past is not necessarily always fated to repeat itself, but that alternative futures can be posited and played out'.<sup>131</sup>

Rogan's sudden epiphany speaks to Lennon's repudiation of violent means after his involvement in the revolution. Like Davern in *Dead Star's Light*, who 'hated the system that made man slay man',<sup>132</sup> Lennon joined the American League Against War and Fascism in the 1930s, and was devoted to the pacifist beliefs of the Quakers and later of Buddhism, later becoming a strong opponent of the Vietnam war.<sup>133</sup> *Down by the Glen Side* thus was part of Lennon's early anti-war agenda and his aim to counteract dominant remembrance of the 'tuppence ha'penny' revolution, which he felt was made up of 'lies'.<sup>134</sup> The English soldier Harley's play within a play highlights the clear propaganda function of *Down by the Glen Side*,

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<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>130</sup> Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 89.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>132</sup> Connor, *Dead Star's Light*, p. 78.

<sup>133</sup> 'Seen and Heard', Ex-Rebel Holds Viet War Futile, *Democrat and Chronicle* [Rochester], 21 October 1967, p. 16.

<sup>134</sup> Lennon, *Lennons In Time*, p. 122.

as '[Mildred] thinks the churches do not reach the people as they should so, we must reach out to them from the stage'.<sup>135</sup>

The connection between *Down by The Glenside* and Lennon's own military experience becomes more apparent in his later memoir, *Trauma in Time*. The memoir swerves from conventional writing into another dialogic play to record the execution scene. This short embedded one act play, *I and Thou*, includes the characters of a partisan officer, a constabulary sergeant, a priest and a member of a firing squad. After an impromptu ambush, the IRA take a number of soldiers prisoner and release all but the constabulary sergeant as 'it would be the end of us all and our homes'.<sup>136</sup> Before the execution, the partisan officer fixes a label of 'police spy' on the front of the prisoner's tunic and ties a bandage around his eyes. The dialogue between the prisoner and the executioner echoes that of the Lennon's earlier play:

Police Sergeant (pleadingly): George, I knew you as a child, you used to play with the head constable's children in the barracks.

Partisan Officer (almost inaudibly): Yes.

Police Sergeant (intimately): You are the one person in the world that can save me.

Partisan Officer (pity is choking him): *I would give anything... anything in the world to save you...but I cannot* –(my emphasis)<sup>137</sup>

The executioner's emphasis on his own powerlessness directly reproduces Rogan's exclamation in *Down by the Glenside* that 'I would give almost anything – but – I cannot'.<sup>138</sup> In this moment, a 'glance of understanding and deep affection passes' between the executioner and his prisoner.<sup>139</sup> This intimate connection between the killer and his victim perhaps ironically evokes the play's title, *I and Thou*, which refers to Austrian-Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue outlined in his 1923 book of the same name. But, unlike the play, there is no sudden change of heart in the memoir; there is no 'Goodbye'. Instead, the partisan officer calls 'fire' and the 'morning silence of the glen is shattered'.<sup>140</sup> As the partisan

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<sup>135</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 38.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>137</sup> Lennon, 'Television play manuscript, *Down By the Glen Side*', p. 32.

<sup>138</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 32.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid*, p. 32.

officer looks down at the dead enemy officer, ‘who is now an enemy no more’, he finds that his ‘turmoil is calmed’. As in Troy’s novel, the act of killing, however horrible, brings comfort. Once again, death is reconciled by the environment, as the play ends with the line: ‘The police sergeant lies peacefully amongst the withered ferns’.<sup>141</sup>

The police sergeant’s pleas to a partisan by the name of George suggests that the partisan officer is an author surrogate and that the constable sergeant referred to is RIC Michael Hickey. Hickey was ‘well-known and well-liked’ and Lennon knew him from his childhood.<sup>142</sup> Lennon’s memoirs are marked by a sense of guilt surrounding this and later events, as he laments that ‘I did not conduct myself with any great show of bravery’.<sup>143</sup> This guilt may have been compounded by the fact that Lennon had been enabled to escape several days earlier by another neighbourly RIC officer, Constable Neery. The 1952 play also hints at the hostility towards RIC officers within the community, as the Constable worries that: ‘if they [the IRA] capture me they will shoot me like a dog – like the police spy I am!’<sup>144</sup> Indeed, after Hickey’s death, local grave diggers initially refused to bury the body.<sup>145</sup> Lennon’s role in his death must have been known; even Davern’s kaleidoscopic memories in *Dead Star’s Light* include that of ‘a figure twisting and falling in the road’.<sup>146</sup>

### ***Trauma In Time: Non-Linear Sequence and Distance***

The evocation of theatrical distance to revisit the execution is one of a number of distancing strategies deployed by Lennon in *Trauma in Time*. The explicit connection between trauma and dislocated time in the title is performed in the narrative as Lennon adopts a disruptive temporal sequence ‘to emphasize mental confusion’ and illustrate the continual intrusion of past memories on the present.<sup>147</sup> While Lennon’s memoir was reordered into chronological order in the published version by Waterford County Museum, Lennon’s non-linear sense of time was a conscious aesthetic strategy explicitly addressed in his memoir:

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<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>142</sup> O’Reilly, *Rebel Heart*, p. 10.

<sup>143</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 33.

<sup>144</sup> Lennon, ‘Television play manuscript, *Down By the Glen Side*’, p. 59.

<sup>145</sup> Lennon, *Lennons In Time*, p. 143.

<sup>146</sup> Connor, *Dead Star’s Light*, p. 78.

<sup>147</sup> Michelle Balaev, ‘Trends in Literary Trauma Theory’, *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 41, no. 2 (2008), p. 159.

Belated Explanation.

In this journal tenses will be found to be mixed and the dates, seemingly, out of their proper order; but not out of context. The motive is deliberate – the illusion of continuity is the personification of our ignorance. The whole of time has already happened.<sup>148</sup>

The non-linear narrative may reflect Lennon's own interest in the philosophy of Zen Buddhism, according to which time 'is conceived of as cyclic rather than linear: history has no overall direction or purpose, and similar patterns of events may repeat themselves many times over'.<sup>149</sup> The employment of the term trauma – a condition that was yet to be medically acknowledged – is also indicative of Lennon's ongoing psychological injuries, summed up in his 1943 medical diagnosis for 'traumatic neurosis, often described as neurasthenia'.<sup>150</sup> The various treatments Lennon sought and the various diagnoses he received did not offer a cure, and his applications for a wound/disability pension were rejected four times. *Down by the Glenside* hints at a scepticism towards the medical management of 'trauma' as Harley's refusal to comply with military discipline precipitated his fellow British soldiers to medically diagnose his intransigence, shouting, 'get a brandy ration – he is suffering from shock!'.<sup>151</sup>

The non-linear narrative of Lennon's memoir conveys the constant lingering unease of past experience. The opening of the memoir refers to his arrival in Ireland in the 1930s, during the Spanish Civil War, as the speaker wonders, 'What in earth brought me back to this place?'<sup>152</sup> Yet, without warning, the next scene jumps to Lennon's departure from New York on 15 May 1971. This disruption of linear time is repeated throughout. On arriving in Dublin in 1971, Lennon sees the Rotunda Hospital in Parnell Square where his son was born. His memory of his son's birth is disrupted, however, by his need to see the site of Vaughan's Hotel which had adjoined the hospital. He is quickly thrown back to 19 September 1920, when he gaily dropped '[a] valise full of booms' into the famous IRA hide out. Celebratory memories of birth are thus intruded by the evocation of his youthful folly in the shadow of death.

This jumping through time is particularly powerful on Lennon's arrival in Cork; his sight of the city brings him back to his 'bright' memory of acquiring a visa to enter the United States from the American consulate in Cobh in 1926. The narrative then shifts to an extract

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<sup>148</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> Damien Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 34.

<sup>150</sup> George Lennon, Application for Military Service Pension, MSP34REF11591.

<sup>151</sup> Lennon, 'Television play manuscript, *Down By the Glen Side*', p. 57.

<sup>152</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 2.

from Fynes Moryson's travel writings from 1603 where Moryson celebrates the Cork production of *usquebaugh* which surpassed the quality of English *aqua vitae*. However, the vibrancy of Cork's native whiskey trade is undermined by the extract that follows: W. M. Thackeray observes in 1842 that 'the traveler is haunted by the face of the popular starvation', an image that leads to Lennon's arrival in Cork Gaol in handcuffs in 1919. In Cork, Lennon decided to cede to this 'eternal recurrence' and lets himself be possessed by a past self:

I checked right out of the hotel. It is just the same as 35 years ago – now I am coming out of the same hotel, I am walking up the same hill and I am going to the same railway station. My itinerary calls for a journey west but I cross over the same platform as before and take a train going in an opposite direction. There seems to be no choice in the matter...<sup>153</sup>

This 'eternal recurrence' has been associated with perpetrator narratives which, according to Gibbs, are less likely to be marked by ellipses or the inability to remember than the persistence of memory, which is 'consciously tormenting rather than suppressed into the unconscious' and which is often underlined by guilt or shame.<sup>154</sup>

Just as linear time is in constant flux, the vantage point alternates on a number of occasions during the journal, jumping from first person to third person to second person narration. Third person narration is used to recount a number of particularly upsetting memories, such as when Lennon fears being discovered on a train and contemplates consuming the 'slim tube of morphine tablets' he kept in his pocket, as 'the idea of wounds and torture filled him with terror'.<sup>155</sup> Lennon also shifts to third person narration to describe the death of a Black and Tan soldier in his arms after an IRA ambush in Kilmallock in August 1920:

But the boy had lost too much blood and he began to sink. Between sips of water the young Tan told him that he came from Liverpool, where he had a wife and kid – he had been unemployed a long time and then he saw this advertisement for policemen in the newspaper. Noticing his distress and seemingly wishing to console him the young Tan said 'it's all in the game, chum'. They held clammy hands, the boy gave him a wan smile, and in a moment he was gone.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 11.

<sup>154</sup> Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*, p. 170.

<sup>155</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 30.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid*, p. 18. Ivan Lennon identifies this man as Ernest S. Watkins.

Once again, the act of perpetrating violence is blunted by the emphasis on the empathetic links between friend and foe. Third person narration also serves as a distancing strategy in perpetrator accounts that, according to Gibbs, set the speaker apart from ‘the uncomfortable inescapability of his individual violent past’.<sup>157</sup> On another occasion, Lennon’s resorts to second-person address which has a similar effect of creating a distance between ‘the writer now and the soldier then’.<sup>158</sup> This is clear in Lennon’s description of an attack on Kilmallock police station:

After the first volley there was a moment of silence and a frightened wail went up from all the houses around. What a strangely satisfying, almost wild, sensation it was to push forward the bolt, feeling the round slide smoothly out of the magazine and into the breach. *You* snuggled the butt voluptuously into *your* shoulder, took careful aim and pulled the trigger. The crash of the rifle was orgiastic. (my emphasis)<sup>159</sup>

Lennon’s account speaks to Bourke’s observations that soldiers could find pleasure, in a primal and even erotic sense, in the act of killing.<sup>160</sup> Yet Lennon’s second person address mellows this sentiment, as it universalises his perpetration of violence and places the reader in the speaker’s shoes.

### **Kathleen of Sleady: Violence Against Women**

In addition to Lennon’s revisiting of his role in the execution of RIC Constable Hickey, Lennon’s physical rejection of a young female revolutionary near Sleady, Co. Waterford, occupies a painful place in his memories. This difficult memory precipitates his retreat to third-person narration once more:

It happened as he passed through the castle garden. The girl appeared as if from nowhere, flung her arms about him and clung to him frantically. *Quite overcome by surprise and a brutal ignorance he pulled her arms away and flung her from him...* but he had not progressed very far down the road when he was overtaken by such a feeling of disgust for himself that he had to lean weakly against the ditch. *Why had he been so cruel, and why inflict such hurt on another*

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<sup>157</sup> Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*, p. 178.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid*, p. 171.

<sup>159</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 15.

<sup>160</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*.

*person?* An inner instinct told him that he lacked something true and something natural. The memory would remain with him forever. (my emphasis)<sup>161</sup>

Lennon's guilt is heightened by the fact that he was never 'permitted to make amends'.<sup>162</sup> When the Truce was announced, he felt little joy as '[s]omething else, more personal, was detaining me'.<sup>163</sup> He returned to Sleady, hoping to see his 'little friend'.<sup>164</sup> By the time he returned, however, 'they would not tell me the circumstances of her lonesome death'.<sup>165</sup> The uncertainty of Kathleen's fate was a source of great distress to him. Looking for answers, he asked an old colleague, Seamus Phelan, 'Why was she buried in unconsecrated ground?' Phelan deftly changed the subject, suggesting that, 'Ah now, such things are best forgotten, best forgotten'.<sup>166</sup>

Yet Lennon did not forget his encounter with Kathleen. In fact, his earlier television play too hints at the mistreatment of women as a consequence of the inexplicable cruelty of war, as Rogan is mocked for 'hating' a girl, significantly also named Kathleen:

2ND IRISH SOLDIER

[...]

*TO ROGAN*

Little Kathleen was there, her eyes shone when she heard Henry Rogan was back in the glen with the column. She's a grand little girl!

ROGAN

*IMPATIENTLY*

That will do!

2ND IRISH SOLDIER

*CONFIDENTIALLY TO HARLEY*

He hates wimmen!

ROGAN

*ANGRILY*

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<sup>161</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 33.

<sup>162</sup> *ibid*, p. 33.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid*, p. 22.

I said that will do!

2nd IRISH SOLDIER

*EXPLAINING TO HARLEY*

Sure, we all love our country so much we have no time to be loving the wimmen.<sup>167</sup>

Concluding his memoir, Lennon imagines his reunification with the constabulary sergeant and Kathleen: they ‘walked hand in hand towards the source of the mountain stream. As they walked along, the little stream gurgled and sang. The mountain was a mass of yellow gorse that gave off a faint and pleasant perfume’.<sup>168</sup> Lennon’s confession that he physically rejected Kathleen is remarkable given that violence against women is often addressed in passing in popular literary representations, with little reflection on the internal motivations or sentiments of the perpetrators. Lennon’s distress at his actions perhaps reflects his dismay at his own failure to abide by the expectations of chivalrous, soldierly behaviour propagated by the Volunteers. Nevertheless, Lennon’s belief, expressed in *Down by the Glenside*, in the need to adopt ‘women’s courage’ in order to challenge militarisation, points to a *gendered* binary logic whereby women are construed as passive and peaceful in comparison to male aggression and war. Such a binary construction perhaps explains the dearth of female-authored perpetrator narratives from the civil war, despite the fact that female revolutionaries perpetrated acts of violence; pro-treaty Cumann na Saoirse women, for example, were recruited as searchers to inspect other female revolutionaries.<sup>169</sup>

Although never published, Lennon’s writings were certainly part of his expressed sense of the need to ‘bring together again old comrades-in-arms’ in order to ‘heal the bitterness that has so seriously retarded national progress’.<sup>170</sup> His memoir, or drafts of it at least, were circulated and read, as clear from a remarkable photograph of Lennon alongside his civil war foe, Paddy Paul in which Paul is holding what is thought to be a copy of Lennon’s memoir.<sup>171</sup> His writings reflect not only his anti-Vietnam activism, but also relate to the outbreak of the

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<sup>167</sup> Lennon, ‘Television play manuscript, *Down By the Glen Side*’, p. 27.

<sup>168</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 47.

<sup>169</sup> See Mary McAuliffe, ‘An Idea Has Gone Abroad that All the Women Were Against the Treaty’: Cumann na Saoirse and Pro-Treaty Women, 1922–1923’, in Liam Weeks and Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh (eds), *The Treaty: Debating and Establishing the Irish State* (Merrion Press, 2018).

<sup>170</sup> George Crolley, ‘An Irish Volunteer’, *The Irish Review* [New York], Vol. 1, no. 2. Here Lennon, writing under a pen name, is supporting the establishment of an Irish Volunteer force under Fianna Fáil in 1934.

<sup>171</sup> Lennon, *Lennons In Time*, p. 231.

Troubles. Lennon's arrival in Dublin in 1971 coincided with 'explosions being set off in the North'.<sup>172</sup> For Lennon, '[r]eligious wars are particularly horrible and they all tend to end in a blood bath'.<sup>173</sup>

### **Anthony O'Connor: *He's Somewhere In There* – A Victim Of History?**

The unease about emerging tensions in the North of Ireland also provided the context for the publication of Anthony O'Connor's first-person autobiographical novel *He's Somewhere in There* (1975). While the novel was severely criticised for its literary merit – the *Irish Press* dismissed it as 'bunk'<sup>174</sup> – Fintan O'Toole sees it as an example of 'scriptotherapy' or 'working through'. In an essay on O'Connor's nephew and namesake, billionaire Tony O'Reilly, O'Toole asserts that the civil war was 'a personal burden' for O'Connor; a burden that was 'too painful to be told bluntly and was wrapped in a thin layer of fiction'.<sup>175</sup> Regardless of its literary merit, the novel contains one of the most stark and shocking confessions of perpetrating violence from the pen of a civil war veteran. In the opening page, the protagonist, Steve Corrigan, laments:

But for this war I should be in America doing a decent job of work – maybe Johnny too – but, here I was, a sergeant in the Free State Army, having killed at least a dozen fellow Irishmen in the wild country road skirmishes that were a feature of the National Army and the Republicans and I not yet twenty years of age.<sup>176</sup>

Presented in the 'foreword' as a 'factual account of the Western Sector during the Irish Civil War 1922/23', the novel opens in January 1923 as the novel's teen narrator, an officer in the Free State army, looks on 'through a mist of tears' as six anti-treaty prisoners are executed. Among the executed is the narrator's childhood friend and Athlone neighbour, Johnny Costello. The novel subsequently traces the circumstances which lead to Steve and Johnny being on opposite sides of the internecine conflict. The midlands garrison town of Athlone is

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<sup>172</sup> Lennon, *Trauma in Time*, p. 5.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid*, p. 43.

<sup>174</sup> *Irish Press*, 19 April 1975, p. 7.

<sup>175</sup> Fintan O'Toole, *The Ex-Isle of Erin* (New Island Books, 1997), p. 32.

<sup>176</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 11.

characterised as ‘overchurched, overpubbed and underhoused’.<sup>177</sup> While the community benefits from the custom of British soldiers and escapes the brunt of the Black and Tans, the town is nevertheless marked by social inequalities: the poor ‘died quietly, unknown, and were quickly forgotten in the couch grass of the shaggy old graveyard at Dunoon’.<sup>178</sup> Though O’Connor takes strong artistic license, the novel was certainly based on the author’s own experiences. Irish Army census records confirm that O’Connor enlisted at the Custume Barracks, Athlone, on 20 June 1922 at the age of eighteen.<sup>179</sup> An Athlone native and son of an RIC officer, O’Connor later emigrated to Canada in 1925, where he worked on the National Railways, before relocating to London in 1927. He served in the Royal Air Force as a Squadron Leader during World War II, and later made a career as a manager in some of west London’s most celebrated gentleman’s clubs. He exposed the underbelly of this gentlemanly world in his tongue-and-cheek memoir *Clublands: The Wrong Side of the Right People* (1976), published just a year after *He’s Somewhere in There*.

O’Connor’s narrative is remarkable not only for its astute social commentary, the narrator also masterfully deploys a range of enabling narrative strategies that address perpetrator guilt while also successfully presenting himself as a ‘victim’ of circumstances. For example, Robert Nye, reviewing in *The Guardian*, praised the honesty of the novel and refers to the narrator as ‘a victim of history’.<sup>180</sup> The narrator’s self-fashioning as a victim of circumstance who lacks agency is yet another commonly identified trope in perpetrator narratives.<sup>181</sup> Even Steve’s hard-hitting, albeit ambiguous, confession that he ‘killed at least a dozen fellow Irishmen’, is strategically prefixed by a reference to his own sense of being ‘trapped’ in the Free State army and his hopes of emigrating. Steve’s contention that he could be working in America with Johnny, but for this war, also provides yet another example of the tendency of perpetrators to identify with the opposing side. As will be discussed below, the novel artfully documents the gradual brutalisation of Steve as an exculpatory strategy to justify his actions.

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<sup>177</sup> *ibid*, p. 98.

<sup>178</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere In There*, p. 13

<sup>179</sup> ‘Anthony O’Connor; Custume Barracks (Westmeath); Age 18’, Irish Army Census Collection 1922, Irish Military Archives, p. 122. O’Connor’s Christian name, on census records, was Stephen Joseph Anthony. He thus shared his first name with the narrator, Steve Corrigan.

<sup>180</sup> Robert Nye, ‘Bread and Butter and a bit of jam’, *The Guardian*, 16 January 1975, p. 11.

<sup>181</sup> Gibbs, *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*, p. 175.

## To Johnny: Empathetic Links With The Foe

The panicky nature of the executions of the six prisoners at the opening of the novel accurately reflects the realities of civil war executions: Johnny refuses his blindfold, round target markers are pinned over prisoners' hearts, and after the line-up shooting, the Provost fires 'a single shot' into each of the prisoners' heads. As Seán Enright illustrates, the National Army practised simultaneous executions, meaning that there were less men firing at each prisoner.<sup>182</sup> Because prisoners often survived the volley, an officer was required 'to administer the coup de grâce'.<sup>183</sup> But there is even stronger factual resonance: the fictionalised execution scene is dated January 1923 which corresponds with the sentencing to death of six anti-treaty combatants in Athlone Barracks on 20 January 1923; five of these were shot.<sup>184</sup> The executed men were attached to the North Galway IRA Brigade and hailed from Connaught; all except for Thomas Hughes, who was from a farm of seven acres in Bogginfin, a short distance outside Athlone.<sup>185</sup>

Given the dates provided in the novel, the circumstances of the firing squad, and the fact that the details of the execution are concealed from the prisoner's mother, there is reason to believe that the character of Johnny is based, however loosely, on Thomas Hughes, the only Athlone native among the executed. While the Hughes family later struggled to gain recognition for their son's death, his execution made headlines at the time and was discussed in the Dáil.<sup>186</sup> The fact that the Hughes family, residents of Athlone, were not informed of their son's execution caused a national outcry. As Seán Ó Laidhin, T. D. explained:

His parents live one and a half miles from Athlone. His mother was in town at the market, and was going home when she was overtaken by some person in authority, who told her about the execution. As this was the first time in the history of Ireland that an execution took place in Athlone, and this man's people live within a mile of the town, surely it was the duty of the Government to notify them before executing him.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Enright, *The Irish Civil War*, p. 34

<sup>183</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>184</sup> General Tom Maguire TD evaded execution. Nollaig Ó Gadhra, *Civil War in Connacht* (Mercier Press, 1999), p. 63.

<sup>185</sup> The men executed were Martin Bourke (Caherlistrane, Co. Galway); Thomas Hughes (Athlone); Stephen Joyce (Derrymore, Caherlistrane, Co. Galway); Herbert Collins and Michael Walsh (from Derrymore, Caherlistrane, Co. Galway).

<sup>186</sup> See Thomas Hughes, DP4571, Military Service Pensions Collection. 'The Late Mr. Thos Hughes, *Westmeath Independent*, 27 January 1923, p. 7.

<sup>187</sup> Seán Ó Laidhin, 'Athlone Executions', Dáil Éireann (3rd Dáil), 30 January 1923. Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/1923-01-30/42> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

In the novel, Steve is responsible for concealing this information from the executed prisoner's mother. When Mrs. Mary Costello comes to the barracks looking for Johnny, she is convinced that 'he's somewhere in there'. Her words give rise to the novel's title. However, Steve cannot bring himself to tell her of Johnny's execution that morning, fearing she would not believe him. He watches 'her walk slowly up Church Street until she merged into the gas-lit shadows, leaving us both with a problem we would never be able to solve'.<sup>188</sup>

It is impossible to decipher whether there was ever such a close friendship between the novelist and Hughes, or whether O'Connor heard the prisoner's request 'to inform his mother that his last thoughts were of her'.<sup>189</sup> But O'Connor fictionally recreates an incredibly intimate relationship between his protagonist, Steve, and the executed Athlone prisoner, Johnny. This close affinity is evident even from the novel's dedication: 'TO JOHNNY'. Like the foreword which describes the novel as a 'factual account', the liminal device of the paratextual dedication *seems* to confirm the authenticity of the testimony. However, as Gerard Genette asks in his influential study on paratexts, 'At the head of a first-person fictional narrative [...] what would stop the author [...] from attributing to the narrator [...] the responsibility for the dedication?'<sup>190</sup> Indeed, it could be that the narrator, Steve Corrigan, is speaking through the dedication rather than the author.

The strong friendship between Steve and John also extends the common narrative strategy of establishing strong 'empathetic links' with the foe: 'Johnny Costello and I grew up together. Our families were neighbours in Arlen Street, Athlone, where our backyards were no more than a 'hop, skip and a jump' from the high flint walls encircling the British army Barracks'.<sup>191</sup> The boy's parents also share Mayo roots, speak Irish together, attend weddings with each other and even reside in the same household after the Costello home is raided.<sup>192</sup> The

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<sup>188</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, pp 216–217.

<sup>189</sup> 'The Late Mr. Thos Hughes', *Westmeath Independent*, 27 January 1923, p. 7.

<sup>190</sup> Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 130.

<sup>191</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 12.

<sup>192</sup> It is unlikely that this fictional childhood connection is an accurate account of the actual relationship between the author and the executed Athlone prisoner, Thomas Hughes. O'Connor was born in Co. Leitrim and lived in Ballyforan, Co. Roscommon — a distance of 24km from Athlone — up until 1915. According to RIC records, John O'Connor was relocated from Roscommon to Westmeath in June 1915. By June 1922, the family's residence was at King St., Athlone. While King St. (later renamed Pearse St.) is located close to the Army Barracks, the Hughes family did not live in Athlone town; they resided in Bogganfin, Co. Roscommon, just outside of the town. Furthermore, O'Connor stresses the close-knit relationships between the Costello and Corrigan families by noting that '[w]e both came from Mayo parents.' However, while O'Connor's mother, Matilda O'Connor, hailed from Mayo, and his father, John O'Connor, from Sligo (the fictional parents are also named Matilda and John), the Hughes family did not have such Western connections; census information indicates that both Hughes parents were Athlone natives.

disintegration of these strong links heightens the dramatic effect of the political schism as loyal childhood friends find themselves torn in opposite directions.

The nostalgic depiction of pre-war family life also provides a canvas of a pre-traumatic past against which to juxtapose the impending trauma of war. Johnny's angelic nature is clear as '[t]he fish always seemed to like Johnny's worm better than mine'.<sup>193</sup> He also abhors violence. Convinced that hunting is 'horrible', he protects a stag from a party of dogs, much to the bemusement of the hunting party. Gradually, however, the simple fishing expeditions become a thing of the past as the boys are corrupted by the militarisation of the society around them. In a military town during the First World War, there was 'plenty of opportunity to go out to the firing range where it wasn't hard to come by the odd Lee Enfield rifle and .303 ammunition'.<sup>194</sup>

After the Black and Tans arrival in Athlone, houses are increasingly targeted and burnt for republican sympathies. Johnny joins the IRA in targeting a number of RIC men and British officers, and is soon on wanted posters 'in connection with an ambush a Dunglass on 15th April in which five auxiliaries and three RIC men were killed'.<sup>195</sup> Steve works as a chemist's assistant up to the Truce, but unwittingly gets wrapped up in the escalating violence around him. When visiting undertaker and IRA intelligence officer Jim Bailey, Steve informs him that RIC officer Sergeant Craddock had raided the Costello home. Three nights later Craddock is assassinated by the IRA, causing Steve 'to reflect on the wisdom of my visit to Jim Bailey':<sup>196</sup>

A burst of machine-gun-fire – said to have come from the lock-up shop of Foley's the greengrocers – shattered the lives of Sergeant Craddock and Constable Tom Healy – Craddock's death was no surprise but there was grief in my home for young Tom Healy who came from Crossmalina, my mother's birthplace. On posting to Athlone he had called often and they talked about the people they knew in the area, but his visits ceased when Johnny 'went on the run' and we were known to be close friends of the Costellos.<sup>197</sup>

This fictionalised account is most likely based on the actual assassination of the Athlone-based RIC officer of the same name, Sergeant Thomas Craddock. A Roman Catholic and a native of Co. Donegal, Craddock had served in the Boer War and was disliked for his

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<sup>193</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 19.

<sup>194</sup> *ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid*, p. 44.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>197</sup> *ibid*, p. 53.

brutal tactics.<sup>198</sup> He was assassinated as he was leaving the ‘Comrades of the Great War Club’ on King St. on 22 August 1920 – the street on which O’Connor himself resided.<sup>199</sup> Steve derides the fictional Craddock for being ‘a rebel hunter who co-operated more than was necessary with the Tans and Auxiliaries and he was hated for it’.<sup>200</sup> Witness statements in the Bureau of Military History similarly record that ‘a favourite pastime’ of Craddock’s was ‘to put a revolver to young men’s heads who were in the movement and threaten to shoot them and so forth’.<sup>201</sup>

Yet if the author had little remorse about the assassination of Craddock, his grief at the death of ‘young Tom Healy’ provides a more balanced picture of the RIC, by illustrating that some officers, such as Healy from Crossmalina, were valued members of the community. This may relate to the fact that O’Connor’s own father, John O’Connor, was in fact an RIC officer who resigned from his position as constable in July 1920,<sup>202</sup> and subsequently resettled in Dublin.<sup>203</sup> Indeed, RIC officers in the Midlands region came under great pressure during the independence period to the extent that representatives from the RIC wrote in June 1918 that, ‘The strain ... is so great ... our comrades ... ruthlessly murdered...’<sup>204</sup> Patrick Shea, a contemporary of O’Connor and whose father also served in the RIC in Athlone, recalled that a ‘feeling of an approaching siege grew’, as the RIC became ‘isolated from the townspeople’.<sup>205</sup> However, O’Connor censored his own father’s RIC connections from the novel, as Steve and Johnny’s fathers both work in retail and insurance in the bustling military town. Steve’s father demonstrates nationalist sympathies, and opposes ‘the summary execution of the leaders’ of the Rising.<sup>206</sup> There are, nevertheless, a number of clashes between father and son, as Steve’s father does not approve of his decision to join the army: ‘My father said I was an idiot. I should stay with my job until my quota number arrived’.<sup>207</sup> This father-son clash re-emerges in the autobiographies of many revolutionaries, such as those of Frank O’Connor and Seán O’Faoláin.<sup>208</sup> The clashes between the RIC and the IRA are also illustrated through the fall out

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<sup>198</sup> Phil Tomkins, *Twice A Hero: From the Trenches of the Great War to the Ditches of the Irish Midlands 1915–1922* (Memoirs Publishing, 2013), p. 116.

<sup>199</sup> John Burke, *Athlone 1900–1923: Politics, Revolution & Civil War* (History Press, 2015), p. 195.

<sup>200</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere In There*, p. 47.

<sup>201</sup> Thomas Costello, ‘Witness Statement’, Bureau of Military History, W. S. 1296.

<sup>202</sup> Royal Irish Constabulary Service Records 1816–1922. Available at: findmypast.ie.

<sup>203</sup> Matt Cooper, *The Maximalist: The Rise and Fall of Tony O’Reilly* (Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2015), p. 29.

<sup>204</sup> Burke, *Athlone 1900–1923*, p. 197.

<sup>205</sup> Cited in Burke, p. 182.

<sup>206</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere In There*, p. 25.

<sup>207</sup> *ibid*, p. 56.

<sup>208</sup> For a discussion of this aspect of O’Connor and O’Faoláin’s autobiographies, see Claire Lynch, *Irish Autobiography: Stories of Self in the Narrative of a Nation* (Peter Lang, 2009), pp 99–126.

between Madigan – an IRA man and later Free State army officer – and his father-in-law who is forced into ‘compulsory retirement’ from the RIC following the Truce in 1921.

### The Road To Brutalisation

When IRA man Jim Bailey tells Steve to keep to himself, his internal response is one of bafflement: ‘Keep ‘yourself to yourself’ at nineteen years of age. How could you do that?’<sup>209</sup> Steve’s unintentional involvement in Craddock’s assassination underscores the impossibility of sitting back and taking no active part in the conflict. When Steve joins the new Free State army in June 1922,<sup>210</sup> he finds himself stationed at Athlone barracks, ‘issued with a Lee Enfield rifle and 150 rounds of ammunition, with a stern warning to hold on to them at all costs or I’d be bloody well shot if I lost them!’<sup>211</sup> Meanwhile, Johnny, already active in the IRA, takes the anti-treaty side. His girlfriend, Maureen, dismisses Steve for his enrolment in the army, exclaiming that ‘any man who wears the Free Staters’ uniform is a traitor to the Cause!’<sup>212</sup> Steve is soon rather regretful about his decision and counts down the days until he can emigrate, ‘The quicker I got out of this country now, the better’.<sup>213</sup> However, he finds himself trapped as deserting the army would harm his chances to get on the quota to Boston.

This overemphasis throughout on Steve’s entrapment is yet another exculpatory strategy. While records show that the author enlisted in the Free State army on 20 June 1922, the naivety of Steve’s enlistment may not be an accurate reflection of conditions in the early days of the civil war. As Burke illustrates, there had already been a number of fatalities in the Athlone area by April 1922, including the assassination of pro-treaty officer George Adamson.<sup>214</sup> Nevertheless, O’Connor may not have envisioned the extent to which the war would escalate on his enlistment. He joined the army a week *before* the civil war erupted. As Burke outlines, a number of Athlone men were involved in the Battle of Dublin; it brought home ‘the fact that war had begun in earnest’.<sup>215</sup>

Steve’s betrayal of his friend Johnny’s trust is illustrated by drawing on the well-established trope of the romance triangle. Rather unwittingly, Steve is seduced by Johnny’s

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<sup>209</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere*, p. 55.

<sup>210</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>211</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>214</sup> Burke, *Athlone 1900–1923*, p. 236.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*

girlfriend, Maureen, who takes an avid interest in republican politics and goads Johnny on in his IRA activities. She also initiates the affair with Steve, and even invites him to spend the night with her. Perhaps more informed by the sexual revolution of the 1970s than attitudes in the 1920s, Maureen denounces the inequalities between men and women in terms of attitudes towards extra-marital sex:

Why did God make it so enjoyable if he wanted us to avoid it? You will have twenty girls maybe more, before you marry. I will have Johnny, and the memory of you, thank God, to content me through the years. Why is it all right for a man to sleep around before marriage and not a woman?<sup>216</sup>

A reviewer in *The Irish Press* denounced the novel as ‘bandwagon writing’, and felt that ‘[t]he exemplification of the whole split in the fate of two friends on opposite sides is trite enough but to have them share the same girlfriend and have the Free State one serve on the execution squad of the other is too much’.<sup>217</sup> Later in the novel, Steve also sets out on a rather trying mission in his Model T to save Maureen from a workhouse ward in Mullingar, where she has been imprisoned and falsely diagnosed with consumption. Another reviewer agreed this detour is ‘rather fanciful’.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, O’Connor’s use of the well-tested romance plot – ‘bandwagon writing’ or not – once again illustrates the intertextual assimilation of literary motifs into veterans’ memoirs. Maureen’s confinement on dubious medical grounds is also indicative of the uncomfortable reality of the institutionalisation of non-conforming women. Steve’s sense of guilt on account of his romantic liaison is also an effective narrative strategy to point to the devastating political split. As Steve laments, ‘I was a traitor to Johnny’.<sup>219</sup> Nevertheless, the idea that Maureen hoodwinked the sexually innocent Steve is contradicted by Steve’s bragging about his own sexual promiscuity elsewhere in the novel.<sup>220</sup>

Despite the ‘fanciful’ romance plot, O’Connor offers astute insights into the poor conditions for soldiers in Athlone, who had to make do with limited weapons, ‘bits and pieces’ of ‘shaggy’ uniforms and delayed payments.<sup>221</sup> Of particular interest is O’Connor’s description of the arrival of ex-British army officers, many of whom had mutinied as part of the Connaught

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<sup>216</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere In There*, p. 106.

<sup>217</sup> ‘Novel Notes’, *Irish Press*, 19 April 1975, p. 7.

<sup>218</sup> J. A. S., ‘Book on civil war has Athlone background’, *Offaly Independent*, 14 February 1975, p. 3.

<sup>219</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere In There*, p. 63.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, p. 127. This is reflective of the realities. As Burke outlines, ‘Athlone had 720 troops in the garrison, yet just 249 rifles, 100 grenades and eighty-seven revolvers’. Burke, *Athlone 1900–1923*, p. 237.

Ranger's uprising in India in July 1920. This brings a renewed sense of army discipline to the barracks as Sergeant Flannery, late of the Connaught Rangers, takes command: 'You are now going to be soldiers, make no mistakes about that. You'll be drilled, route marched and sweated until you are. No passes. Reveille at 6.15 a.m. By your bed at 10 p.m. Lights out at 10.45 p.m'.<sup>222</sup> This emphasis on military order is also accompanied by heavy drinking and the soldiers' boasts about their commercial relationships with women. Steve hears that in India, Pershore, Rawalpindi and Karachi, 'the wimmin there have tits as long as yer arms. They're untouchable until ye give 'em a couple o' bob... then they're all right'.<sup>223</sup> Steve also witnesses first-hand the emotional turmoil endured by the Connaught Rangers, as one soldier, Gallagher, re-enacts an incident when his friends were marched away by military policeman in Pershore, 'I never seen me friends agin. ... Murdhered, that's what they were, by that ould bastard, an' not a sowl would belave me'.<sup>224</sup> In his distress, Gallagher lashes out at a colleague for no particular reason: 'He grabbed a bayonet from its scabbard and, in a maniacal fury, began to lunge at all and sundry. There was no doubt his intentions to drive it in someone'.<sup>225</sup>

This connection between what could be described as posttraumatic stress disorder and a propensity towards violence underlines much of the officers' activities and sets the context for the descending spiral of violence which overwhelms them. Entering the army as a young nineteen year old, Steve has little experience of warfare. However, the events he witnesses gradually lead to his brutalisation, converting the innocent, and perhaps foolish, chemist assistant into something of a killing machine.

Much of the early activities of Steve in the civil war consists of attempts to challenge anti-treaty columns in the rural outskirts of the town; this reflects the military presence of the Western Command of the Free State army in the area during this early civil war period. These activities included 'a small number of unsuccessful operations against anti-treaty men in rural areas' which led them 'to drop back to the towns of Sligo, Athlone, Birr and Roscommon'.<sup>226</sup> Steve's first mission is a cycling expedition with ten other men on the outskirts of Athlone. As they reach an old cottage, machine-gun fire 'raked our patrol with a steady, relentless, staccato pounding. Men fell or were shot off their bikes'.<sup>227</sup> While the ambush party quickly flee, seven of the party of ten soldiers are described as 'dead or badly wounded'.<sup>228</sup> Steve bends over the

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<sup>222</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 78.

<sup>223</sup> *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>224</sup> *ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> Burke, *Athlone 1900–1923*, p. 237.

<sup>227</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 84.

<sup>228</sup> *ibid.*, p. 86.

body of his roommate, ‘lying in a pool of black liquid... An only child with a widowed mother. It was so obscene’.<sup>229</sup> While the death toll is an exaggeration of the actual events, the Free State army did experience severe losses. As Burke sums up, ‘[Seán] Mac Eoin [General officer commanding of the Western Command] again sent men out to the countryside in an effort to arrest IRA activists, and some success was seen, albeit not without casualties. Mac Eoin harried the enemy, losing a young soldier at Glasson, 16-year-old John McCormack in the process’.<sup>230</sup>

### ‘I Had Carried Out Orders’: Exculpatory Strategies

After this ambush and the death of his roommate, Steve is given a two-day pass from the army. He finds it impossible, however, to articulate the experience to his family, indicating, perhaps, archetypal posttraumatic behaviours. On his return, he is chosen by Sergeant Madigan to form a ‘flying column to root out and destroy all rebels in the west of Ireland’.<sup>231</sup> Although apprehensive, Steve justifies his participation in the column by indicating that it was preferable ‘to staying in a barrack room with the Connaught Rangers’.<sup>232</sup> The column was to be led by a Colonel Lawson, formerly a major in the British army; he is described as being ‘one of Michael Collins’ right-hand men and as tough as they come’.<sup>233</sup> This change and adventure give Steve ‘a little thrill’, further illustrating the feelings of pleasure evoked by combat.<sup>234</sup>

Life on the road, however, came with its own dangers. Steve expresses the soldiers’ fear of their superiors. On one occasion, Colonel Lawson pulls out his revolver and declares that ‘if any man is not in cover when we next make a sudden stop, I will personally shoot him’.<sup>235</sup> In this context, O’Connor presents Steve as possessing no more than rudimentary agency over his actions. While Steve was initially reluctant to agree with Madigan that the IRA were ‘sneaking bastards’,<sup>236</sup> his admiration for the prowess of the anti-treaty side quickly wanes. When sent to ‘root out’ two strong groups of the IRA on the Galway/Mayo border, Steve’s party stumble across a land mine and are ambushed by rifle and machine gun fire. This attack results in ‘seven killed and nine wounded’ in the Free State camp, with twelve dead and

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<sup>229</sup> *ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>230</sup> Burke, *Athlone 1900–1923*, p. 239.

<sup>231</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere In There*, p. 112.

<sup>232</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>233</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>235</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>236</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85.

eighteen taken prisoner on the republican side. The ambush has a profound impact on Steve, as he stumbles across the bodies of ‘three very dead young men’ who had been shot by ‘one of our Lewis gunners’.<sup>237</sup> As Steve confesses:

For me the ambush and its aftermath had been a nightmare of cruelty and casualness. I had carried out orders. I had shot, pulled, tugged, lifted and buried in an atmosphere of hate and viciousness that would seem impossible in the men who, a few months earlier, had been side by side in Ireland’s problems.<sup>238</sup>

While the death tallies listed are far higher than the reality, landmines were indeed deployed in and around Athlone, causing much destruction to the railway lines.<sup>239</sup> Steve’s brutalisation had just begun, however. He tries to aim off target, but Madigan chides his poor marksmanship, threatening that ‘you’re going to get a couple of them or I’ll want to know why!’<sup>240</sup> Caught between Madigan’s ‘prodding’ and his own instinct for self-survival, Steve is forced into killing.<sup>241</sup> He justifies (and rationalises) his shooting by attempting to objectify his targets: ‘As I aimed, I tried to make believe it was only a dark object and there was nothing at the end of it. When I pulled the trigger I saw the head jerk up and pitch away. I got two other heads quickly in the single shots and there was silence from the rocks’.<sup>242</sup> Although praised for his accuracy by Madigan, Steve is apprehensive about any celebration for ‘[k]illing three fellow Irishmen and adding to a sorrow that will not heal for a decade’.<sup>243</sup>

Steve’s careful descriptions of his limited agency enable him to justify his actions: he is presented as naïve in his decision to enlist in the Irish Free State army, he is led to commit violence only in response to the death of colleagues, he initially attempts to shoot off target, and only finally shoots to kill when his own life is on the line. As Timothy Williams contends, this emphasis on constrained agency is a key feature of the self-representations of perpetrators:

Perpetrators do this firstly in an attempt to portray themselves as rescuers, bystanders or victims, and secondly to discuss the agency (or, better, lack of agency) that they perceive themselves to have had within their positions. Both of these are attempts to reduce the

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<sup>237</sup> *ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>238</sup> *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*, pp 119–120.

<sup>243</sup> *ibid.*, p. 120.

responsibility they purport to have had for their actions, and by extension, their culpability for violence.<sup>244</sup>

Steve's relative innocence is also exemplified through comparisons between himself and other, more sadistic officers. Colonel Lawson is 'ruthless' in his 'bloody manhunt' for rebels and threatens to shoot Steve for sheltering from a 'stream of bullets' from the anti-treaty IRA.<sup>245</sup> Some of his fellow officers also take deep pleasure from combat; O'Halloran 'enjoyed mowing the prisoners down' and boasts of his prowess with a machine gun.<sup>246</sup> The inclusion of 'negative referents', or the emphasis on the 'worse behaviour of others', is identified by Clare Bielby as a further exculpatory narrative strategy in perpetrator narratives.<sup>247</sup>

Steve's attitude towards the anti-treaty IRA grows more complex after his comrade, Madigan, is killed in an ambush and he is tasked with breaking the news to Madigan's wife. He now comes to deride his opponents, claiming, '[t]hey looked so 'enemy' – strong and rugged in their shaggy jackets and cloth caps. They couldn't be Irish, these men who could blast the life out of Madigan and a dozen others'.<sup>248</sup> By the final ambush of the novel, Steve has become almost unfeeling. Thirteen of the original 110 men in Athlone had been killed, including a soldier killed by a female sniper. Like the author, Steve is promoted to the rank of sergeant for his valiant efforts, much to the disgust of one ex-Connaught Ranger who was critical of the promotions of 'young scallywags'.<sup>249</sup> With more composure than previously, Steve shoots unmercifully at his opponents when a mine goes off a mile outside of Kilconnell, beyond Ballinasloe:

I concentrated on the bush hiding the machine gun. I took steady aim and emptied the magazine of my Lee Enfield. I knew I'd get him or them unless they had armour plating, or got me first. The staccato splatter ended when a man hurled sideways from the bush.<sup>250</sup>

The emphasis on the distance provided by the hidden machine guns and armour plating exemplifies the combination of 'numbed killing' via the 'agentic modes' of technological

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<sup>244</sup> Williams, 'Agency, Responsibility, and Culpability', p. 42.

<sup>245</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 119.

<sup>246</sup> *ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>247</sup> Clare Bielby, 'Scripting the Perpetrating Self: Masculinity, Class and Violence in German Post-Terrorist Autobiography', in Clare Bielby and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer (eds), *Perpetrating Selves: Doing Violence, Performing Identity* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), pp 95–96.

<sup>248</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>249</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 180.

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*, p. 182.

warfare which is commonly considered to enable violent acts in modern warfare.<sup>251</sup> By the time Johnny, his childhood friend, is arrested, Steve's numbing is complete to the extent that he cannot save his friend's life. Although Johnny ensured Steve's safety when he drove across the country to save Maureen from the hospital, Steve does not, and cannot, intervene to save his friend. While he manages to avoid being in the firing squad by swapping with a colleague, Steve nevertheless watches on as the executions take place. In response to the death of Johnny, his natural instinct is to hold his gun closer: 'I felt very alone and held tight to the Lee Enfield rifle that was now as much part of me as an arm or a leg'.<sup>252</sup> Steve has become mechanised by military norms and the technology of warfare.

His numbness is further illustrated by the fact that he is not permitted to speak of the executions and thus becomes part of a conspiracy of silence to repress the stories of both the Free State army and the executed republican dead. O'Connor's novel, published over fifty years later, is written, therefore, as a response to this repressive silence and in an attempt to re-voke the memories of the dead: 'Now it's just the Irish fighting among themselves and no one, least of all the British, could care less. The dead are planted out and that's the end of it'.<sup>253</sup> The civil war comes to an end soon after Johnny's execution, further illustrating the futility of such loss of life.

Despite such a reparative aim, O'Connor's explicit representations of violence produce an uneasy admixture between educating readers on the horrors of war and perpetuating a 'pleasure culture of war' whereby war and killing are honoured. His subsequent memoir, *Clublands*, sheds some further light on this enigma. After the civil war, O'Connor served in the RAF and was enveloped in military culture for the rest of his life. His later memoir, *Clublands*, humorously recalls O'Connor's years as a manager in West London's exclusive gentleman's clubs. Unlike the graphic representations of war in *He's Somewhere In There*, O'Connor sidesteps his Second World War experience in *Clublands*, and rather mocks the bravado of his military-medal-wearing clients. He ridicules Lord Branton for his fear of cockroaches, commenting that, 'I knew that although he had shot *a dozen something or others* in East Africa, one of our little speedsters landing on his head would scare the daylight out of him'.<sup>254</sup> This reference to the number of deaths committed by Branton is redolent of the key line in *He's Somewhere In There* in which the novel's protagonist confesses to his own role as

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<sup>251</sup> Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing*, p. 5.

<sup>252</sup> O'Connor, *He's Somewhere In There*, p. 11.

<sup>253</sup> *ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>254</sup> Anthony O'Connor, *Clubland: The Wrong Side of the Right People* (Martin Brian & O'Keefe, 1976), p. 95.

a perpetrator: ‘Here I was, a sergeant in the Free State Army, having killed *at least a dozen* fellow Irishmen...’.<sup>255</sup> In both cases, the men are characterised by the death toll they were responsible for, suggesting that the military feat, in this hyper-masculine Clublands world, was determined by the extent of one’s participation in killing. In this context, could O’Connor’s fictionalised confession of such killing in *He’s Somewhere In There* indulge in some sort of trophy-collecting? Does his novel and its exaggerated death toll play into this problematic military culture?

Yet even if O’Connor was informed by such military bravado, his genuine scepticism towards the glorification of war is expressed through his support of the 1969 feature film *Oh What a Lovely War*, co-produced by O’Connor’s nephew, photographer Brian Duffy. The film is highly critical of the roles of British generals for their over-eagerness in sacrificing the lives of their men. O’Connor’s comment that ‘[General] Haig had destroyed a generation of young men, millions of them, in fruitless slaughter at Ypres’ caused club members to call for his resignation. Moreover, Clublands hints at another context underpinning the production of *He’s Somewhere in There*. On 11 December 1974, the IRA shot up the front of the Cavalry Club. Sardonic as ever, O’Connor attributes this to an awful attempt at ‘agneau irlandais’ in the Club in the days preceding the attack:

It may have been coincidence, but the general feeling was that someone must have tipped off the IRA about this treasonable affront to a national dish. The next day they shot up the Club with a machine-gun, luckily harming nothing but the facade. They couldn’t even hit the window.<sup>256</sup>

Despite such a blasé account, this instance is integral for appreciating the context in which *He’s Somewhere In There* emerged. Indeed, in the foreword to the novel, O’Connor celebrates the election of Erskine Childers in 1973 as a demonstration by ‘Southern Ireland’ of their ‘distaste and boredom with the happenings in Ulster’.<sup>257</sup> That Childers was Protestant, had an English accent, and was born in Chelsea to an American mother and English father was

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<sup>255</sup> O’Connor, *He’s Somewhere In There*, p. 11.

<sup>256</sup> O’Connor, *Clubland*, p. 83.

<sup>257</sup> O’Connor notes in the preface that Childers was executed by ‘a firing squad, commanded by my cousin, Rory, at Portobello Barracks in Dublin.’ This seems to have led Gabriel Rosenstock to believe that O’Connor was a cousin of Rory O’Connor, the Dublin-born anti-treaty leader who was executed in Mountjoy Gaol in December 1922. Gabriel Rosenstock, ‘Little Lines of Ireland’, *Irish Independent*, 25 January 1975, p. 8. This reference to ‘cousin Rory’ is unclear and may, indeed, be a fabrication; the leader of the firing squad which was in command of Childers’ execution was Free State officer, Paddy O’Connor, of Limerick.

evidence for O'Connor of 'the best traditions of the Anglo-Irish' which were integral to paving a path of peace essential for a 'united Ireland'. Childers' election too was perhaps seen as reparation for the death of his father, also Erskine Childers, who was famously executed by Free State forces during the civil war when found in possession of a gun which had been given to him by Michael Collins. Not only that, but Childers had made his 16-year-old son, the future President, promise that he would to seek out each of the men who had signed his father's death sentence – and offer them forgiveness.

If the context of the Troubles was a motivation for the publication of *He's Somewhere In There*, the conflict also detracted from O'Connor's novel, as arguably neither publishers nor the public had a particular desire to review the earlier civil war during the 1970s. Assessed through the criterion of literature rather than as life writing, *He's Somewhere In There* garnered little critical attention, with one reviewer advising him to study 'the techniques of the historical novel, as expounded by Stendhal, Tolstoy, or di Lampedusa'.<sup>258</sup> The relative neglect of O'Connor's remarkable novel, another 'unlistened-to story' from the pen of a Free State army officer, further illustrates the scholarly disregard of fictionalised testimonies and points to the limited appeal of perpetrator narratives, regardless of the many self-protective and self-justifying narrative strategies mobilised by O'Connor.

## Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the extent to which popular narratives directly confronted the contentious and complex subject of perpetrator trauma, despite a wider tendency to downplay the violence of war in favour of an image of the exceptional soldierly respectability of the IRA. Indeed, the culture of disillusionment following the revolution must be considered in the context of perpetrator trauma. However, many popular testimonial literary accounts have been omitted from the canon of 'brutal literature of despair' which is largely identified with the work of Seán O'Faoláin, Frank O'Connor, and Liam O'Flaherty.

While there is little scholarly consensus on the nature of perpetrator trauma, these popular narratives point to contemporary beliefs that combatants could break down due to their roles in enacting violence, while other representations convey killing as a source of comfort,

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<sup>258</sup> Gabriel Rosenstock, 'Little Lines of Ireland', *Irish Independent*, 25 January 1975, p. 8.

or even pleasure. Perpetrator trauma is also represented as perpetuating a cycle of violence, as the anxiety associated with combat could engender further violence. The enduring influence of early cultural and literary narratives of perpetrator trauma is also abundantly clear as veterans' own memories are often intertextually produced. For both George Lennon and Anthony O'Connor, their writing was as much about the search for personal catharsis as it was about encouraging future generations to learn from the mistakes of the past. This is all the more pertinent in the context of the Northern Irish Troubles. However, the authors' expressed wish to address their own experience of perpetration required them to adopt numerous self-protective narrative strategies to make their testimonies consumable to the public – and also bearable to themselves. The need for such narrative shields is particularly apparent in this chapter, as both Lennon and O'Connor adopt tried-and-tested fictional motifs, engage in intertextual dialogues or experiment with first-, second- and third-person narration. Their self-representation as perpetrators, nevertheless, illustrate the grey zone between victims and perpetrators. This is particularly evident in O'Connor's novel, which is defined by the careful deployment of exculpatory strategies to downplay personal responsibility and present the protagonist as a victim of circumstances.

Perpetrating violence is inherently tied to masculinity, to the extent that women, as expressed by Lennon, are seen as an antidote to male aggression. This complicates the production of female perpetrator narratives as women are more likely to self-represent as victims. Nevertheless, a number of testimonies in Chapter Three hint at female-generated violence; these testimonies merit further consideration, especially in terms of their contestation of conventional constructions of women as passive victims. Úna Troy's novel also illustrates the consequences of men's perpetrator trauma on their personal relations and its lingering effects in the domestic sphere.

The diasporic conditions of the production of Lennon's and O'Connor's testimonies – and indeed, of many of the testimonies explored in this dissertation – also merit further consideration. The civil war precipitated high levels of displacement among various demographic groups – such as the retreat of many Southern Protestants, the 'forgotten exodus of Northern nationalists', and the 'flight' of many anti-treaty republicans who struggled to gain employment under the Free State. Emigration, too, was prescribed to veterans suffering from nervous conditions; this was in line with conventional 'rest cure' therapies which promoted a change of environment – often to a warmer climate – for recovery. The taboo of killing was also concealed through emigration: Desmond Ryan recalls delivering a man named O'Dwyer to a sailor on Dublin's North Wall; the IRA wanted him 'vanished'. O'Dwyer had killed a man

with a 'swing of his hurley in rage'. As Ryan recounts, however, America did not provide a quick solution: 'O'Dwyer is still there, haunted and restless, and a psychoanalyst there had guessed his secret, which left so deep a mark on his mind and character'.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Desmond Ryan, *Remembering Sion* (A. Barker, 1934) p. 246.



## AFTERWORD

My jail experience is written in letters of fire across my brain, never to be effaced.<sup>1</sup>

Polly Cosgrove, Kilmainham Jail internee.

[The] civil war [...] wounded Irish family relationships so deeply that it could still hardly be spoken of in the Ireland in which I grew up. In that silence wounds festered, scar tissue distorted the body politic, and the idea that lies were safer than truth became the norm.<sup>2</sup>

Felicity Hayes-McCoy (born 1954).

The above quotes encapsulate the complexities addressed within this project; namely the tension between civil war veterans' inability to forget and the dangers of remembering, especially felt by subsequent generations. It is between remembering and forgetting, between the 'imperative to tell' and the obstacles to telling, that this project is located. Almost one hundred years on, critics, scholars, and the public are still uneasy about how to address, commemorate, or even evade, the Irish Civil War during the approaching centenary (2022–23). Yet despite such a longstanding tendency to repress civil war accounts, the writings considered in this dissertation highlight that many veterans lived with an 'imperative to tell and to be heard' that is often shared by those who have experienced traumatic events.<sup>3</sup> This urge to tell brought them into direct conflict with the realm of official remembrance which self-admittedly glossed over memories of Ireland's independence struggle that did not adhere to a glorified national narrative. As Rev. Fr. Aloysius exclaimed in 1942: 'Let us forget what is painful – let us remember what is heartening and inspiring'.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the widely reported 'veil of silence' that supposedly shrouded the events of the civil war, this dissertation illustrates that reticence cannot be equated with forgetting. In fact, civil wars engender vibrant bodies of competing discourses; the Irish Civil War is no exception.

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Polly Cosgrove to Bridie Halpin on NDU paper, 19 July 1923. Kilmainham Jail Archive, OBJ0027.

<sup>2</sup> Felicity Hayes-McCoy, *A Woven Silence* (Gill & Macmillan, 2015), p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> Dori Laub, 'An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival', in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing, Psychoanalysis and History* (Taylor and Francis, 1992), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Fr. Aloysius, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 200, p. 18.

And if civil war is deemed to be ‘uniquely traumatic’, the experience of trauma itself is generative as much as it is privative.<sup>5</sup>

The ‘trauma’ of the civil war also has less to do with the events of 1922–24 than it does with the wider cultural and social narratives through which civil war is mediated and constructed as traumatic. In the case of the Irish Civil War, the conflict was codified as traumatic in real time; this narrative of trauma was then extended after the fact. However, the Irish Civil War was also imagined as particularly devastating before it even occurred, owing to past narratives of civil war as uniquely traumatic. This culturally constructed collective trauma did not abide by strict historical dates and timelines; the civil war became the canvas onto which all that was ‘painful’ and to be ‘forgotten’ was projected. Veterans who committed themselves to writing about the civil war thus often exploited Ireland’s intranational struggle to explore an array of personal, cultural, political and social traumas that were both directly and indirectly connected to the revolution.

The cultural narrative which mediated the Irish Civil War as a collective ‘trauma’ was less taboo than individual psychic trauma in the early decades of the twentieth century. The incidences of mental illness which accompanied or resulted from Ireland’s struggle for independence were at odds with the foregrounded, state-sanctioned heroic narrative. Nervous disabilities challenged the virile, militaristic narrative of war and threatened the post-colonial state-building project which aimed to counter colonial stereotypes of the Irish as effeminate. More so perhaps than in other post-conflict societies, veterans who suffered from injuries such as ‘neurasthenia’, ‘mental aberration’ or ‘psychasthenia’ were left uncompensated. However, revolutionaries educated themselves on evolving psychoanalytic, spiritualist, and religious approaches to the psychological legacies of war. A number of their writings even challenge the conventional medical management of such conditions: both George Lennon and Garret O’Driscoll suggest that medical diagnoses were exploited as a means of controlling those who threatened the status quo. Their writings perhaps support Kalí Tal’s contention that, in dominant medical practices, ‘[t]he successfully ‘cured’ posttraumatic stress patient is no longer a revolutionary’.<sup>6</sup>

If cultural and social understandings of trauma constantly develop over time, what does not change is the common urge among those who have lived through traumatic events to somehow unburden themselves of negative emotions and share their story through a testimonial

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<sup>5</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (Routledge, 2013), p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) [Online edition].

act. This ‘imperative to tell’ produced a rich abundance of civil war testimonies that facilitated a counter memory to the dominant commitment to ‘forget’ the civil war. These traumatic memories were often articulated in narratives that moved away from conventional autobiographical forms; veterans creatively carved out liminal narrative spaces for themselves in order to facilitate their breaking of silence. This dissertation argues that popular realist, seemingly artless, middlebrow or lowbrow fiction was the preferred model of self-expression for many veterans; this genre could arguably grapple with traumatic representation as much as the fragmented narration associated with high modernism. This endorsement of popular realist forms owes much to the literary practices of the time, as realist autofictional testimonies abounded in the aftermath of the First World War. The gothic too allowed for the exploration of the unknown and the repressed, while romance fiction and children’s fiction provided a sturdy cover for explorations of transgressive themes at odds with official commemorations. In light of a strong culture of litigation and libel cases, fiction offered a sense of protection and created greater distance between the author and reader to enable the treatment of more contentious subject matter.

The remarkable dominance of hybridised testimonies by civil war veterans strongly supports scholarship in autobiography studies, such as Leigh Gilmore’s study which argues that authors ‘swerve from the formal constraints of autobiography when the representation of trauma coincides with self-representation’.<sup>7</sup> While most studies on the connections between trauma testimony and hybridised life writing are grounded in the postmodernism of the 1980s and 1990s, this case study strongly suggests the need for the incorporation of fictionalised memory in historical studies of earlier periods. This project is particularly rich in source material given the fact that, as Peter Hart averred, ‘Ireland’s may be the best documented modern revolution in the world’.<sup>8</sup> There is a wealth of supportive material in the forms of witness statements to the Bureau of Military History (1947–1957), applications for military service pensions and disability allowances, IRA and Cumann na mBan nominal rolls and brigade activity files, not to mention memoirs published in newspapers and journals. These all enable the rich contextualisation of autofictional narratives, highlighting both the faithfulness of many fictionalised testimonies to the real life experience of the author, but also their inevitable contradictions, fabrications, and self-censorship. Literary forms of expression are also particularly relevant in the study of civil war (self)representation – perhaps even more so

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<sup>7</sup> Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at War 1916–1923* (Oxford University Press, 2005) p. 5.

than in the case of other conflicts. The use of well-established civil war motifs – often indebted to the Roman civil war tradition and even Irish mythology – proved helpful in appealing to readers on both sides of the civil war split. A thin veil of fiction enabled veterans like Patrick Mulloy to not ‘whisper’, but ‘shout’ about their civil war experience.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this project is the outright neglect of these testimonies in scholarship to date. On discovering the writings of Garrett O’Driscoll, Jody Allen Randolph marvelled at the fact that a woman ‘who inscribed female characters into revolutionary events in her fiction [...] [was] erased from the national canon’.<sup>9</sup> Yet the same shock and outrage can be applied to almost all the testimonies explored in this dissertation. Their occlusion can be traced back to the strength of the revolutionary canon formation, spearheaded by writers and critics like Seán Ó Faoláin. This project highlights the neglect from literary studies of less-easily categorizable narratives; middlebrow, perhaps subliterate, autobiographical projects have been overlooked despite their commanding testimonial functions. Yet the omission of these testimonies is not merely indicative of a narrow focus within literary studies. It highlights a major blind spot in twentieth century Irish historiography, characterised by a distrust of popular culture, a refusal to follow Hayden White’s destabilisation of the dichotomy between fiction and history (which gained ground in the 1970s), and a continued stress on a disjuncture between (official) *History* and memory.<sup>10</sup> The wealth of civil war testimonies written in the Irish language underscores the need for a bilingual approach to the study of Irish history. This omission is hardly surprising, however. As Vincent Morley recently contended, ‘the inability of so many historians of Ireland to read primary sources in the indigenous language of the country is the most striking example of the profession’s failure to adapt its techniques to meet the challenges posed by the raw materials of Irish history’.<sup>11</sup>

For historian Robert Fanning, ‘[t]he many voices of those who became the cannon fodder of the revolution and of the civil war must for the most part remain forever inaccessible’, because ‘[h]owever diverse the range of written sources, they can, of course, only shed light on the motivations of the lettered and of the literate’.<sup>12</sup> Rather than yield to the inaccessibility

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<sup>9</sup> Jody Allen Randolph, ‘If no one wanted to remember’: Margaret Kelly and the Lost Battalion’, in Tina O’Toole, Gillian McIntosh, and Muireann Ó’Cinnéide (eds), *Women Writing War: Ireland 1880–1922* (University College Dublin Press, 2016), p. 144.

<sup>10</sup> Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Vincent Morley, *The Popular Mind in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2017), p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Fanning, ‘Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890–1923’, *History Ireland* (blog), 3 March 2015, available at: <https://www.historyireland.com/book-reviews/vivid-faces-the-revolutionary-generation-in-ireland-1890-1923/> (Accessed 20 August 2020). See also Fearghal Mac Bhloscaidh, ‘Objective

of certain aspects of everyday experience in revolutionary Ireland, this dissertation builds an alternative archive of testimonies which to grapple with the memory of the everyday. For Mary Manning, it was Kenneth Sarr's autobiographical novel, *Somewhere to Sea*, that offered an insight into the 'great solid mass of quiet people who went on living and eating and laughing and sleeping or trying to sleep during those years'.<sup>13</sup> Autofictional novels expressly aimed to address civilian experience of war; Patrick Mulloy endeavoured to offer 'a tale of plain people caught in the mad whirl of revolution', in juxtaposition to the many accounts by revolutionary leaders. Strong insights into class divisions in the context of the revolution also emerge in such less conventional life writing. This merits further study beyond the remit of this dissertation, as does the mass displacement and emigration of people after the revolution and its impact both on personal memory and the production of testimony.

The writings explored in this study challenge many firmly-held convictions in Irish historiography. It shows that autofictional narratives were amongst the earliest testimonial accounts of the revolution and that fiction interacted with, and informed, first-person testimony. It illustrates how women took ownership of war and women's pain as a subject through fiction, and that fiction enabled them to both secure an audience and to overcome the self-deference often evident in first-hand accounts by female revolutionaries. Despite a widespread emphasis on the culture of sexual prudery ushered in by the new state, autofictional narratives hint at a more liberal, inquisitive attitude to changing gender roles and non-heterosexual relations connected to the shifting sexual landscape during wartime. Autofictional representations of the Volunteers' relations with prostitutes also complicate the supposed piety of IRA combatants, which, it has been suggested, ensured 'relatively restrained' levels of sexual violence in revolutionary Ireland. However, violence, including sexual violence, is explicitly and implicitly addressed in many of these accounts, suggesting that these taboo elements of the conflict were not as 'hidden' as often perceived.

The testimonial narratives analysed here were often produced despite severe obstacles: they were hidden behind pen names, rejected from theatres and publishing houses, sent to publishers abroad, and self-published at the authors' own expense. In some cases, authors went to great efforts only to meet censorship or face libel cases. The lengths to which the veterans considered in this study went to write, produce, and publish their testimonies testifies to the

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Historians, Irrational Fenians and the Bewildered Herd: Revisionist Myth and the Irish Revolution', *Irish Studies Review* 28, no. 2 (2 April 2020), p. 208.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Manning, 'Backdrop for a Troubled Stage (Review): *Somewhere to the Sea*, by Kenneth Reddin', *The Saturday Review*, 5 September 1936, p. 18.

strength of their urge to tell. Many of these narrative were self-acknowledged projects of what Suzette Henke refers to as ‘scriptotherapy’; this is either acknowledged by the authors or metafictionally incorporated into the narrative itself. However, the cathartic compensation of writing was often a never-ending task, offering respite, rather than resolution.

Though trauma studies often risk conflating trauma with victimhood, the testimonies here defy such an easy equation and highlight the constant collapse of the categories of victim, bystander and perpetrator. This project illustrates that veterans were not only urged to tell about their own suffering, but in some cases, they were also compelled to publicly air their stories of perpetrating violence. Nevertheless, blurred ethical lines also emerge between ‘bearing witness’ to the pain of others, and inflicting a second, textual violation through graphic representation which could be likened to a form of ‘trophy keeping’.

Although these testimonies shed light on individual psychological pain – often through fictional author surrogate characters, or through secondary witnessing by proxy of other characters – they are nevertheless directed outwards as much as inward. Ultimately, for these veterans, the various self-protective narrative strategies adopted are indicative of the lengths taken to be able to reach a public audience and find confirming witnesses for their private stories. Intended audiences, be they pro- or anti-treaty, could also shape narrative forms as veterans tapped into models of memory already in circulation and which would resonate with their chosen imagined audience. However, audiences too shaped what is not said; a dilemma particularly challenging for presenting perpetrator trauma or sexual trauma, topics readerships were less accustomed to receiving. Telling was thus always accompanied by the need to conceal; even if Desmond Ryan advocated ‘blow[ing] off steam once and for all’, he nevertheless acknowledged he ‘threw some of the less welcome into the wastepaper basket’.<sup>14</sup>

This dissertation also highlights the readers of the testimonies discussed and their roles as secondary witnesses. These are the readers who ensured autobiographical novels like *Jackets Green*, *Ugly Brew*, *Benson’s Flying Column*, *The Marriage of Nurse Harding* and *Somewhere to Sea* found themselves on the bestseller list. They included IRA veteran Mike Quill who could not ‘stop reading’, for whom reading the accounts of others may have functioned as a means to vicariously remember his own revolutionary days. These imagined communities of engaged witnesses are also addressed in nearly all of the testimonies considered; in dedications, paratexts or introductory prefaces. The collaboration of testimonial storytelling is most powerfully addressed in Dorothy Macardle’s *Earth-bound*, in which the narrators are

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<sup>14</sup> Desmond Ryan, ‘Still Remembering Sion’, *University Review* 5, no. 2 (1968), p. 245.

surrounded by a group of engaged respondents who validate their stories. In receiving these stories, it is the readers who facilitate the translation of personal narratives into public testimonies. It is also the interaction of the texts and their readers that facilitates a counter memory of the civil war in opposition to state-sanctioned ‘amnesia’.

While readers empathetically identified with the stories of others – as evident in critics’ reviews and personal letters to authors – the release of painful stories into the public domain also exposed veterans to backlash. Ryan wrote in the knowledge that his writing might be dismissed as ‘bilge’ by the ‘professional critics’. It may even be that readers are more disposed to discredit and deny the testimony of painful experience than to actively engage in empathetic responses.<sup>15</sup> Reviewers could dismiss Annie M. P. Smithson’s novel as ‘naïve pages’<sup>16</sup>, while Patrick Mulloy’s *Jackets Green* was ‘revolting’<sup>17</sup>, and Anthony O’Connor’s *He’s Somewhere in There* was scorned for its ‘low level of intelligence and sensibility’.<sup>18</sup> For some, the act of speaking, but not being listened to, proved incredibly painful; Mulloy’s story was censored and proved financially ruinous due to an unsuccessful defamation case. Even after the ban was lifted, the novel was never reprinted, despite Mulloy’s lifelong efforts.

If the reception of these testimonies by contemporary readers is critical to bringing the stories to testimonial resolution, what is the role of the researcher as an active witness, albeit at a historical remove? For Dominick LaCapra, working with testimony ‘raises the issue of the way in which the historian or other analyst becomes a secondary witness, undergoes a transference relation, and must work out an acceptable subject-position with respect to the witness and his or her testimony’.<sup>19</sup> Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub liken the role of readers and listeners to ‘the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time’.<sup>20</sup> However, this model risks privileging the expertise of the analyst/reader over the agency of the testifying subject. As Tal strongly objects, ‘the survivor’s experience has been replaced by the experience of those who come in contact with the survivor’s testimony – an appropriative gambit of stunning proportion’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Eden Wales Freedman, *Reading Testimony, Witnessing Trauma: Confronting Race, Gender, and Violence in American Literature* (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2020), p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Eimar O’Duffy, ‘Review of *The Walk of a Queen* by Annie M. P. Smithson’, *The Irish Review*, 6 January 1923, pp 70–71. Cited in Flanagan, p. 69.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Book Prohibited in Free State: Author’s Libel Action Against Newspaper’, *The Guardian*, 25 May 1937, p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Gabriel Rosenstock, ‘Little Lines of Ireland’, *Irish Independent*, 25 January 1975, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Shoshana Felman ‘Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching’ in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (Taylor and Francis, 1992), p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> Kalí Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 21.

In addition, the concept of the reader as a ‘blank screen’ entails a denial of the researcher’s subjectivity.<sup>22</sup> This emphasis on the detachment of the historian is perhaps indicative of the dominance of positivism and empirical inquiry which underwrites much historical study – even more so, perhaps, in the Irish context. Rather than reflect on the possibility of transference and countertransference, as Anne Karpf outlines:

Historians rarely reflect on their own affective investment in the material they study; indeed, there is often an inverse relationship between the traumatic intensity of the event being studied and their readiness to discuss their own emotional involvement or the affective sources which led them to take up that research field in the first place [...] [A]ny leakage of feeling into research often still seems to be a source of shame, a transgression of the ideal type researcher. What appears to be demanded of the historian, in such cases, is the blank canvas of the psychoanalyst, upon which history itself can project its own feelings. This kind of history has its roots, according to Hayden White, in the ‘profound hostility to all forms of myth’ [...] in historiography after the French Revolution, which required the historian to expunge from their apprehension of reality any intuitive processes.<sup>23</sup>

This project evoked a continuum of affective experiences and unsettling encounters. The sense of responsibility at the heart of a project that seeks to revoice muffled, dissenting voices of trauma was brought home to me as I read Kathleen Hoagland’s autobiographical novel, *Fiddler in the Sky*, published in the United States in 1944.<sup>24</sup> The only copy available in Ireland was in the National Library. As I read the text, I had to physically separate the pages, some of which, due to a printing error, were still uncut. I was this copy’s first reader. Once again, it might be asked how could an autobiographical novel that conveys the intersection between revolutionary politics, domestic violence and emigration be omitted from all scholarly consideration? How did Hoagland’s account go unread in Ireland, though it was well received in the United States? And how, in historical research, does this entail a burden of responsibility, as the researcher ‘becomes not only a secondary witness but in some sense also a surrogate

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<sup>22</sup> Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (Springer, 2012), p. 42; Tal, *Worlds of Hurt*, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> Anne Karpf, ‘Chain of Testimony: The Holocaust Researcher as Surrogate Witness’, in Nicholas Chare and Dominic Williams (eds), *Representing Auschwitz: At the Margins of Testimony* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), p. 86.

<sup>24</sup> I have discussed Hoagland’s novel elsewhere due to the word limits on this dissertation. See ‘Sick on the Irish Sea, Dancing across the Atlantic’: (Anti)-nostalgia in Women’s Diasporic Remembrance of the Irish Revolution’ in Oona Frawley (ed), *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Indiana University Press, 2021), p 88–106.

one, charged with speaking on behalf of those who no longer can[?]'<sup>25</sup> While there is a tendency to assume any projects which seek to recover stories of pain are unquestionably 'ethically-valuable', Colin Davis has recently argued that this 'uninterrogated commitment to the ethical value of secondary witnessing is the founding blind spot of trauma studies'.<sup>26</sup> As he contends, 'if we are response-able, we are responsible'.<sup>27</sup> To use Michael Rothberg's words, how might the historian also be an 'implicated subject' – who occupies a position 'aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm'?<sup>28</sup>

On other occasions, maintaining distance as a researcher became even more challenging. When checking page numbers for Máirín Cregan's, *Hunger-strike* (1932), again in the National Library of Ireland, I found a handwritten inscription on the opening page: 'To Mrs. Davin and Maudie wishing them a Happy Christmas, from Máirín Cregan, 1932.' From an objective standpoint, I could have easily included this reference into the discussion of Cregan's play: the dedication is another reminder of the audacity of Cregan who published her remarkable autobiographical play at her own expense. The play documents the deep psychological implications of the revolution in the domestic world and her confirming witnessing audience was made up of her fellow revolutionaries: Maudie Davin, a Dublin musician, also probably transported messages in her violin case; during the Rising, Cregan sent a coded telegraph to the Davin sisters – 'Delighted to assist at concert' – to inform the Dublin Volunteers that she had gained assistance in Tralee to transport arms.<sup>29</sup> Cregan shared her play as a Christmas present with an audience that she knew would be attuned to her story, an intimate audience who could readily validate the sentiment of her play.

However, the significance of this encounter with this intimate personal message stretched beyond the question of the text's reception. Maudie Davin is also my great-grandmother. I had already written an essay on Cregan's play as I held the copy in front of me,<sup>30</sup> with no idea how Maudie's copy of *Hunger-strike* had ended up in the National Library.

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<sup>25</sup> Karpf, 'Chain of Testimony', p. 87.

<sup>26</sup> Colin Davis, 'Trauma, Poststructuralism and Ethics', in Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), p. 41.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 41. Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Máirín Ryan, 'Witness Statement', Bureau of Military History, W. S. 416, 28 Iúil 1950, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> See Síobhra Aiken, 'The Women's Weapon: Reclaiming the Hunger Strike in the Fiction of Dorothy Macardle, Máiréad Ní Ghráda and Máirín Cregan', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 14, no. 1 (2 January 2021), pp 89–109.

This was just one of a number of many encounters which highlight the impossibility of the ‘noble dream’ of objectivity in historical research. This is perhaps disproportionately the case in studies of the Irish revolution, owing to the island’s small population, and the emotional connections of many historians to the topics they cover. It was also in Máirín Cregan’s and Jim Ryan’s home in Greystones that Maudie Davin met her future husband: Frank Aiken. Perhaps more than any other Irish statesman in the twentieth century, Frank was known for his unease with the memory of the civil war. As head of the Fourth Northern Division IRA, he attempted to remain neutral on the outbreak of hostilities, reciting an old proverb in a now widely-cited quote that ‘[w]ar with the foreigner brings to the fore all that is best and noblest in a nation – civil war all that is mean and base’.<sup>31</sup> He adopted a unique stance of neutrality, only siding with the republican camp after being arrested and imprisoned in Dundalk by members of the pro-treaty Fifth Northern Division. After their escape, his division played no significant part in the war. Not long after Frank was appointed IRA Chief of Staff following the death of Liam Lynch in April 1923, he gave a ‘dump arms’ order, effectively ending the civil war.

I was often reminded of his words that ‘dreadful things happen in war and worse in civil war’ – although I knew little, if anything, about the events in question. Frank was highly reticent about his revolutionary experience, never speaking to his family about his own actions as a perpetrator or of the suffering inflicted on those close to him. When I went to visit Francis Carty’s son in Ballsbridge in December 2019, Francis Xavier Carty presented me with an old newspaper cutting proving Frank’s frequently-evoked stubborn silence: the article was an *attempt* by Carty, then editor of the *Irish Press*, to interview Frank on his retirement from political life in 1969. Even if Carty’s mother, Margaret, had harboured Frank when he was on the run in 1923, it was no good. As Carty wryly wrote, ‘when Frank Aiken wishes to say nothing he smiles in a friendly way, shakes his head from time to time, uses practically no words at all’.<sup>32</sup> That same summer Frank had a ‘great bonfire’ in his office, burning all his civil war papers. He is remembered as somewhat of a ‘historian’s worst nightmare’.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps this project, to use Frank O’Connor’s words, is its own ‘act of reparation’.

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<sup>31</sup> Frank Aiken first employed this proverb in a letter to the provisional government on 3 August 1922. Michael Hopkinson, *Green against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Macmillan, 1966), David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (Yale University Press, 2017), p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Francis Carty, ‘Frank Aiken: some personal impressions’, *The Irish Press*, 8 July 1969, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Frank Aiken Jnr, ‘Preface’, in Bryce Evans and Stephen Kelly (eds), *Frank Aiken: Nationalist and Internationalist* (Merrion Press, 2014), p. xvi.

Rather than deny one's implication in the research undertaken, therefore, it is perhaps more productive to address the 'affective investment' in this research – including the risks involved. As LaCapra outlines:

the two extremes in trying to come to terms with emotional response are this: full identification, whereby you try to relive the experience of the other, or find yourself unintentionally reliving it; and pure objectification, which is the denial of transference, the blockage of affect as it influences research, and simply trying to be as objectifying and neutral an observer as possible.<sup>34</sup>

Yet while the 'blockage of affect' seems the preferred model, this positivist refusal to address the researcher's own emotional responses may prove more problematic than over-identification. As Marla Morris argues:

Without at least the awareness of what defence mechanisms are and what they do, the historian is at the mercy of her own repressions. These repressions and resistances will determine, to a certain extent, what it is the historian chooses to write about or not write about. What gets excluded from history, then, has as much to do with what it is historians can psychically handle.<sup>35</sup>

This project highlights a tendency among scholars to avoid writing about topics which might be both psychically challenging and which defy straightforward empathic identification. The experience of perpetrators hardly emerges in scholarship of the revolution, and when it does, there is a tendency toward moral judgement;<sup>36</sup> sexual violence still causes unease, evident in scholarly efforts to downplay its occurrence; while women's writing that is more difficult to understand from a feminist perspective is less likely to be 'recovered'. It might be time thus to develop an ethics of history writing in the Irish context which would address the subjectivity of the researcher. Historian and Holocaust survivor Saul Friedländer suggests that the historian should include metafictional self-reflexivity in their works, contending that 'the voice of the commentator must be clearly heard' in order to 'disrupt the facile linear progression of the

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Professor Dominick LaCapra, Cornell University, 9 June 1998, Jerusalem. Available at: <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/interviews/dominick-lacpra.html> (Accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>35</sup> Marla Morris, *Curriculum and the Holocaust: Competing Sites of Memory and Representation* (Routledge, 2001), p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> See Eve Morrison on Anne Dolan, Morrison, 'Witnessing the Republic: the Ernie O'Malley Notebook Interviews and the Bureau of Military History Compared', in Cormac O'Malley (ed.), *Modern Ireland and Revolution: Ernie O'Malley in Context* (Irish Academic Press, 2016), p. 139.

narration, introduce alternative interpretations, question any partial conclusions'.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, Dominick LaCapra calls for 'empathic unsettlement' whereby the historian receives the traumatic experience of others without appropriating it, and where empathy is accompanied by critical distance.<sup>38</sup>

If this dissertation highlights the subjectivity of the testimonial writings under interrogation, it also acknowledges that any historical writing is the product of a 'ratio of subjectivities' made up of 'that of the witness and that of the historian'.<sup>39</sup> The selection of the texts for analysis within this study itself is perhaps most evidently subjective. I have attempted to incorporate as broad a range of testimonies as possible from as many perspectives, and have aimed to address both pro- and anti-treaty outlooks in each chapter. In a number of cases, I also selectively chose narratives, not only for thematic and formulaic purposes, but also for the extent of contextualising information available. The word limit prevented the inclusion of another chapter on the dynamics of exile and trauma which I plan to address in future research. Many of the texts alluded to in passing – and listed under 'testimony' in the bibliography – are worthy of articles and books chapters themselves and open up numerous avenues for postdoctoral research.

My selection of testimonies of those who were directly involved, and whose fictionalised testimonies could be corroborated with other 'official' sources, was part of an attempt to prove the validity of such autofictional writings and make the strongest case possible for their inclusion in historical study. However, that is not to say that imaginary testimonies, written by those with no first-hand experience, do not contribute to social memory as much as accounts by combatants based on direct experience. As a result, future research demands the broad consideration of a wide range of popular writings and testimony, even when the autobiographical nature are not easy to discern.

The consideration of civil war writings by non-veterans also opens up possibilities for the study of civil war narratives by later generations; there is no shortage of such narratives. Such a study would further tease out the inheritance of 'silence' often associated with the post-memory, or second, generation and consider the legacy of that 'silence' up to the present day. Memory is always in a state of constant mediation and remediation, and the approaching commemorations of 2022–2023 will produce another crop of competing narratives for further

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<sup>37</sup> Cited in Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Cornell University Press, 2016), p. 212.

<sup>38</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 78.

<sup>39</sup> Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 22.

study. As Desmond Ryan presciently warned, ‘we should always be Still Remembering Sion’.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ryan, ‘Still Remembering Sion’, p. 252.



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