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## Revolutionary Masculinities in the IRA, 1916-1923

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## Abstract

This thesis examines manly ideals and the experience of masculinity amongst members of the revolutionary Irish Republican Army from the Easter Rising of 1916 to the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923. Whilst the political convictions of these men and the detail of events they participated in have been researched widely, they have not been considered as gendered beings or as inhabitants of sexed bodies. The consistent ideal of martial manliness in the Irish Republican Army has been noted but insufficiently explored by historians, whilst the way that this ideal shaped individual men's subjectivities, behaviours and experiences has been almost entirely overlooked. This thesis therefore constitutes the first attempt to examine the revolutionary experiences of the Volunteers *as men*. It firstly explores the consistent norms and ideals of martial manliness which were disseminated across Irish republican discourses, and then considers how those norms and ideals shaped the young revolutionaries' conceptions, performances and depictions of their masculinity. Specifically, it examines the public presentation of manliness, the regulation and management of emotion, and the experience of brotherhood and male friendship. To do so, the thesis draws primarily on the ego documents – the letters, diaries, memoirs, and other retrospective accounts – of actively engaged Volunteers. These sources are read alongside contemporary public sources in order to ascertain how the pressure to live up to a particular model of military masculinity manifested in the actions, appearances and recollections of IRA soldiers.

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## List of Abbreviations

BMH WS - Bureau of Military History Witness Statement  
 GAA - Gaelic Athletic Association  
 IPP - Irish Parliamentary Party  
 IRA - Irish Republican Army  
 IRB - Irish Republican Brotherhood  
 NLI - National Library of Ireland  
 RIC - Royal Irish Constabulary  
 UCDA - University College Dublin Archives

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## Introduction

The Irish revolutionary period, from the Easter Rising of 1916 to the end of the Civil War in 1923, was dominated by republican gunmen. The political convictions of these men and the detail of events they participated in have been researched widely, but they have not been considered as gendered beings or as inhabitants of sexed bodies. The consistent ideal of martial manliness in the Irish Republican Army has been noted but insufficiently explored by historians, whilst the way that this ideal shaped individual men's subjectivities, behaviours and experiences has been almost entirely overlooked. This thesis examines the revolutionary lives of Irish Volunteers and their experiences *as men*. It will consider how the norms and ideals of Irish martial manliness – as expressed in the discourses of Irish republicanism – helped to determine how these men conceived of, performed and then depicted their soldierly roles. The thesis will thus focus on the public presentation of manliness, the regulation and management of emotions, and the experience of brotherhood and male friendship.

### The making of the IRA

In November 1913, the Irish Volunteers were publicly launched in Dublin with the expressed aim to 'make an honest and manly stand' to 'secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland'.<sup>1</sup> The movement's leaders called on

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<sup>1</sup> Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers (25 November 1913), p.3 [available at: [http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/bitstream/10599/9706/3/wm\\_DSC\\_0480.jpg](http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/bitstream/10599/9706/3/wm_DSC_0480.jpg)]; The Irish Volunteers were created in response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteers ten months earlier. The Ulster Volunteers were created with the intention to block Home Rule in Ireland which looked set to pass through parliament. On 1 November 1913, Eoin MacNeill, a Professor of History at University College Dublin, wrote an article in the Gaelic League journal *An Claidheamh Soluis* entitled 'The North Began' [available at: <http://historyhub.ie/assets/The-North-Began.pdf>]. MacNeill claimed that the armament of any Irishmen – including Ulster Unionists whose politics were diametrically opposed to his nationalism – was good for the nation. He advocated for nationalist Irishmen to set up their own militarised organisation in support of Irish self-government. MacNeill became the Chief-of-Staff of the Volunteers, having launched the organisation alongside Chairman of the Dublin IRB Bulmer Hobson and member of

Irishmen to join up ‘in the name of National Unity, of National Dignity, of National and Individual Liberty [and] of Manly Citizenship’.<sup>2</sup> The driving force behind the movement was the secret revolutionary organisation the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) but the majority of those who joined up supported the constitutionally nationalist Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) who campaigned for Home Rule.<sup>3</sup> In June 1914, when the Volunteers had grown to a force of almost 200,000, IPP leader John Redmond negotiated control of the organisation by threatening to start a rival group if 25 of his nominees were not accepted onto the Provisional Committee.<sup>4</sup> When Redmond began encouraging Volunteers to join the ranks of the British Army in the First World War three months later, the membership split as the majority who followed the IPP became the ‘The National Volunteers’ whilst a minority of 11,000 recruits kept the original Irish Volunteer title and opposed any involvement in the conflict.<sup>5</sup> As the National Volunteers membership dissipated, the Irish Volunteers held strong and their members went on to take part in the Easter Rising of 1916, where this thesis begins. It covers an eight year period from 1916 to 1923, and so considers not only the conflict of the Rising, the War of

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the Gaelic League’s governing body, Michael ‘The’ O’Rahilly. The Gaelic League was founded in 1893 to promote Gaelic culture and language, and was the centre point of the Gaelic Renaissance (See P. Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* (Cambridge, 1999), J. Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 1987) and T. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic revival and Irish Society 1893-1910* (New York, 2008)).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid; The Irish Volunteers were not the first of their kind in Ireland, and not the first to adopt a firmly masculine self-image. Local nationalist militias named Irish Volunteers had been created in 1778 whilst the Society of United Irishmen enacted the failed 1798 rebellion (See P. Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (London, 2010) and C. Kennedy, ‘What Can Women Give But Tears’: *Gender, Politics and Irish National Identity in the 1790s* (PhD thesis) (University of York, 2004). The Young Irelanders of the 1840s and Fenians of the 1860s were, meanwhile, each all-male republican groups that, unsuccessfully, sought to challenge British rule (See J. Quinn, *Young Ireland and the writing of Irish history* (Dublin, 2016) and N. Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900* (Cambridge, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Twelve of the original Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers were IRB members, and made up over a third of the total – the rest were either unaffiliated or members of the IPP, United Irish League or Ancient Order of Hibernians (M. Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the Nationalist Movement in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Manchester, 2009), p.124); See O. McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 2005) for a comprehensive look at the IRB.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> M.J Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism* (Woodbridge, 2006), p.232-234.

Independence and the Civil War but also the moments of relative peace in between when recruits still trained, drilled, engaged in lesser offensive action, and faced imprisonment for their republican activity and Volunteer membership.

The Easter Rising was organised by the Military Council of the IRB and enacted by the Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army, with support from the women of Cumann na mBan and the boys of Fianna Éireann.<sup>6</sup> It saw the occupation of buildings and fighting on the streets of Dublin for six days before surrender to the British forces who had been sent to suppress what was deemed a treasonous wartime uprising. At the time, the rebellion was commonly referred to as the Sinn Féin Rising, but Sinn Féin was then a more moderate organisation and only committed to republicanism in 1917.<sup>7</sup> The Rising was a military failure and was not initially supported by the majority of the civilian population, but the draconian policy of executions and mass internment employed by the British authorities in its aftermath generated widespread sympathy for the rebels and their republican cause. Anti-British sentiments developed further when the government sought to extend conscription to Ireland in 1918. The general election of the same year saw constitutional nationalism destroyed as the IPP held only 6 seats to Sinn Féin's 73. The elected republican MPs did not take their seats at Westminster and instead on 21 January 1919 they established Dáil Éireann as an independent Irish parliament. On the same day, a group of Irish Volunteers – who from 1919 became known as the IRA – ambushed members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in Tipperary, seizing their weapons, the explosives they were transporting and killing two officers in the process. This has often been regarded as the first operation of the Irish War of Independence but

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<sup>6</sup> See A. Matthews, *The Irish Citizen Army* (Cork, 2014), C. McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2014) and M. Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution 1909-23: Scouting for Rebels* (Manchester, 2019) for more on each organisation.

<sup>7</sup> See M. Laffan, *The Resurrection of Sinn Féin* (Cambridge, 1999) for more on the development of Sinn Féin.



guerrilla warfare did not in fact become widespread until the IRA's General Headquarters sanctioned warfare against British forces a year later on 1 January 1920.<sup>8</sup> Two months later, the Black and Tans, officially the 'RIC Special Reserve', entered the country in a bid to defeat the IRA, and were joined that summer by an Officer class known as the Auxiliaries. The IRA and Sinn Féin's war effort was based on a successful combination of guerrilla tactics, intelligence operations and a national and international propaganda machine. The War of Independence came to an end when a truce was called in the summer of 1921. It was followed by negotiations in London which culminated in the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December. The Treaty did not create a republic but the Irish Free State, which was still affiliated to Britain and crucially required members of Dáil Éireann to swear an oath of allegiance to the King. This was unacceptable to many republicans including President Éamon de Valera, and the Dáil was divided between those who accepted the Free State as a steppingstone to full independence and those who refused to stop fighting until their republican ideal became a reality. That division developed into a civil war between the Free State Army and the republican anti-Treaty IRA, which began in June 1922 and was notably bloodier than the War of Independence had been. The conflict ended in May 1923 as the IRA conceded defeat and discarded their guns.

'The Irish Revolution' is the label conventionally applied to the years 1916-1923, but some have questioned its accuracy and utility. Aidan Beatty, for example, has contended that, as an 'analytical tool', the term is 'fraught with problems' and it is therefore more 'profitable' to consider 'a long arc of development' spanning a much wider period. Whilst his approach may be fruitful for those seeking to understand wider

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<sup>8</sup> J. Augusteijn, 'Military Conflict in the War of Independence' in J. Crowley, D. Ó Drisceoil and M. Murphy (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (New York, 2018), p.351.

processes in Irish history, this thesis concerns a specific organisation in a specific historical moment of upheaval and will therefore use the terms ‘Irish revolution’ and ‘Irish revolutionary period’ throughout.<sup>9</sup>

### Masculinity, nationalism and militarism

For most of the twentieth century, masculinity was rarely problematised, or even noticed, by historians in Ireland and across Europe.<sup>10</sup> Men and their actions may have dominated the historical canon, but they were not considered as gendered beings and their dominance was ‘accepted rather than analysed’.<sup>11</sup> Masculinity was ‘left behind the scenes, writing the scripts, directing the action and operating the cameras, taken for granted and almost never defined’.<sup>12</sup> This had implications for understandings of gender relations more broadly – the study of women’s subordination was incomplete without the study of men’s power. Natalie Zemon Davis was one of the first to recognise the prevailing imbalance, contending in 1976 that ‘we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than a historian of class can focus exclusively on peasants’.<sup>13</sup> Her argument was increasingly taken up, and John Tosh has placed the late 1980s as the moment that a dedicated field exploring the history of masculinities was born.

At the same time, sociologists were also paying increasing attention to masculinities and in 1987 Raewyn Connell published her foundational theory of

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<sup>9</sup> A. Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938* (London, 2016), p.3; A. Beatty, ‘An Irish revolution without a revolution’, *Journal of World-System Research* 22.1 (2016), pp.54-76.

<sup>10</sup> M.S. Kimmel, ‘Rethinking “Masculinity”: New Directions in Research’ in M.S. Kimmel (ed.), *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* (London, 1987) p.10.

<sup>11</sup> M. Roper and J. Tosh, ‘Introduction: Historians and the politics of masculinity’ in M. Roper and J. Tosh, (eds.), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London, 1991) p.9; J. Horne, ‘Masculinity in politics and war in the age of nation-states and world wars, 1850-1950’ in S. Dudink, K. Hagemann and J. Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester, 2004) p.36.

<sup>12</sup> P. Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity & Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (London, 1992), p.153.

<sup>13</sup> N. Zemon Davis (1976) in M. Vincent and R. Shoemaker, ‘Introduction’ in M. Vincent and R. Shoemaker (eds.), *Gender and History in Western Europe* (London, 1998), p.4.

hegemonic masculinity.<sup>14</sup> Connell contended that, embedded within the social and cultural discourses of any given society, there is a dominant form of masculinity against which other forms are subordinated. The majority of men aspire to this self-sustaining hegemonic ideal, but it is largely unattainable, functioning more as something to aspire to than something to live up to. The theory is, however, of limited use in studies of ‘actual men’: it is successful as an ‘account of ideals, fantasies and desires’ but not as a means to understanding ‘social practices’.<sup>15</sup> Whilst the hegemonic ideal of masculinity found in the IRA is considered in this thesis, the primary analysis centres on the impact that ideal had on the experiences, recollections and performed identities of ‘actual men’. The term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is not used in the chapters that follow. Rather, ‘manliness’ is, broadly speaking, used to refer to idealised codes of manly values and practices, as distinct from ‘masculinity’, which is used to refer to men’s performed identities. It should be noted, however, that the term ‘masculinity’ has only come into popular usage relatively recently. None of the primary sources discussed in this thesis use the word ‘masculinity’, though some do use the terms ‘manly’, ‘manliness’ and ‘manhood’.<sup>16</sup> In the majority of cases, however, neither manliness nor masculinity were named, instead being revealed in more subtle ways through references to particular values, appearances and actions.

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<sup>14</sup> R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the person and sexual politics* (Cambridge, 1987); R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept’, *Gender and Society* 19.6 (2005), pp.829-859.

<sup>15</sup> B. Griffin, ‘Hegemonic Masculinity as a Historical Problem’, *Gender & History* 30.2 (2018), p.384.

<sup>16</sup> The term ‘masculine’ was used infrequently in English-language writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but became far more prevalent from the 1960s. Use of ‘manly’ and ‘manhood’, however, peaked in 1858 and 1889 respectively, declining thereafter but remaining in popular usage into the 1910s and 1920s (Google Ngram Viewer, <https://books.google.com/ngrams>); The only reference to masculinity that I have come across in republican circles around the early twentieth century is in the souvenir booklet from Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral in 1915 which stated that, ‘Rossa, a man of magnificent masculinity, could not be cowed by British judge or British soldier. In prison he withstood hardship and torment with the same dauntless courage’ (National Library of Ireland (henceforth NLI) MS 13,174/12/1, Souvenir Booklet for Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral at Glasnevin Cemetery (1 August 1915)).

In accordance with Connell's approach, the majority of historical studies of masculinity also prioritise representations and ideals of masculinity over the experience of being a man. In the words of Michael Roper, who, along with John Tosh, has sought to remedy this imbalance, masculinity has been 'conceived primarily in terms of social ideals' and scholars have not tended to consider how those ideals have been 'understood and negotiated by human subjects'.<sup>17</sup> That fact has not been readily acknowledged, however. Publications are often presented as rounded studies of masculinity in a particular moment and place, sometimes 'peppered...with references to subjectivity', despite concentrating almost entirely on 'normative concepts' of masculinity and their public dissemination.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, men's emotional experiences and practices are notably absent from most histories of masculinity. In 2005, Roper wrote that 'the challenge that faces future work on the history of masculinity is to develop approaches that take full account of emotional experience' but that challenge has not been readily taken up.<sup>19</sup> Two chapters of this thesis do look specifically at the intersection of masculinity and emotion, and draw on the fast-developing field of the history of emotions.<sup>20</sup> The primary concept framing their analysis is William Reddy's notion of the

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<sup>17</sup> M. Roper, 'Between Manliness and Masculinity: The "War Generation" and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950', *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (2005), p.345.

<sup>18</sup> M. Roper, 'Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History', *History Workshop Journal* 59 (2005), p.58.

<sup>19</sup> Roper, 'Between Manliness and Masculinity', p.362.

<sup>20</sup> The origins of the field lie in Peter and Carol Stearns's coining of the term 'emotionology' – the emotional norms and standards of a society – in a 1985 article (P.N. Stearns and C. Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: clarifying the history of emotions and emotional standards', *The American Historical Review* 90.4 (1985), p.813). William Reddy ('Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions', *Current Anthropology* 38.3 (1997), pp.327-351; *The Invisible Code: Honour and Sentiment in post-revolutionary France* (Berkeley, 1997); *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001); *The Making of Romantic Love: Longing and Sexuality in Europe, South Asia and Japan 900-1200* (Chicago, 2012)) and Barbara Rosenwein (*Anger's Past: the social uses of an emotion in the Middle Ages* (London, 1998); 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review* 107.3 (2002), pp.821-845, *Emotional communities in the early Middle Ages* (London, 2006); *Generations of feeling: a history of emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge, 2016)) have also been instrumental in establishing the field's methodological framework; For a detailed account of the development of the history of emotions, see J. Plamper *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015) and R. Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester, 2018).

‘emotional regime’ which governed the emotional expressions – what he called ‘emotives’ – of individuals within a given society or milieu.<sup>21</sup>

The history of masculinity’s preoccupation with representation over experience has also meant that relationships between men are regularly overlooked. Simultaneously, whilst a distinct subgenre focusing on male ‘homosociality’ – defined simply as ‘social bonds between persons of the same sex’ – in history has developed in recent years, it often neglects the role of masculinity in shaping those relationships.<sup>22</sup> As the final chapter of this thesis shows, the social reality of homosocial spaces can be fruitfully explored through the lens of masculinity. Indeed, concepts relating to personal experience like ‘emotional regime’ and ‘homosociality’ are valuable for the advancement of the history of masculinity, for they provide an avenue to go beyond popular representations to the lives of real men. Whilst a small number of historians have begun to bring masculine subjectivities to the fore, it remains the case that popular understandings, representations and stereotypes of men’s gender take precedence in the majority of publications with an expressed focus on historical masculinities.<sup>23</sup> This is very much the case in the limited field of Irish historical masculinities, as will be discussed in the next section.

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<sup>21</sup> Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p.323.

<sup>22</sup> N. Hammaren and T. Johansson, ‘Homosociality: In Between Power and Intimacy’, *SAGE Open* 4.1 (2014), p.1; The term was first coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> Notable inroads have been made into masculine subjectivities in modern British history. Michael Roper and Jessica Meyer have each published on masculinity and experience amongst British soldiers in the First World War, whilst John Tosh has explored the lived reality domestic masculinity in the Victorian period (M. Roper, ‘Between the Psyche and the Social: Masculinity, Subjectivity and the First World War Veteran’, *Journal of Men’s Studies* 15.3 (2007), pp.251-270; M. Roper, ‘Between Manliness and Masculinity: The “War Generation” and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950’, *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (2005), pp.343-362; M. Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester, 2009); J. Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2009); J. Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England* (London, 2007)

Despite its recurrent disregard for social realities and individual experiences, the study of historical masculinities is now a wide-ranging and respected field that encompasses many themes, places and periods. For this thesis, research focusing on the intersection of nationalist and military masculinities is the most significant.<sup>24</sup> George Mosse was amongst the first to historicise the connection between masculinity and nationalism, arguing that modern nationalism and masculinity ‘evolved parallel’ to one another, both consolidated at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> More broadly, scholars have explored how nationhood is often understood and presented in gendered terms.<sup>26</sup> The prevalence of terms such as ‘motherland’ and ‘fatherland’, familial representations of the nation, the allegorical depiction of the nation as a woman and the contention that men are duty bound to protect her and fight for her are amongst the ways that the historical intersection between gender and nationalism has been explored.<sup>27</sup>

As the final example suggests, gendered conceptions of nationalism come to the fore especially clearly in military organisations and in society at large during wartime.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> That connection has been widely theorised from a sociological perspective too. Joane Nagel, for example, has argued that concepts like bravery, duty and honour are ‘hard to distinguish as either nationalist or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied both the nation and to manliness’ (J. Nagel, ‘Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21.2. (1998), p.252; See also C. Enloe, ‘Nationalism and Masculinity: The Nationalist Story is Not Over - and It Is Not a Simple Story’ in C. Enloe (ed.), *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Los Angeles, 2014); A. McClintock, “‘No Longer in the Future Heaven”: Gender, Race and Nationalism’ in A. McClintock, A. Mufti and E. Shohat (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives* (London, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> G.L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1996) p.7.

<sup>26</sup> Ida Blom has argued that the foundations of gendered understandings of nationhood lie to two parallel processes: the first is the development of male-only standing armies and conscription which institutionalised the idea that military protection of the nation was the sole responsibility of men, and the second is the popularisation of Darwinist biology which understood gender roles to be innate and unchanging. Together, she argues, these developments resulted in a definitive conception of men as protectors and defenders of the nation and women as weak, passive and in need of protection (I. Blom, ‘Gender and Nation in International Comparison’ in I. Blom, K. Hagemann and C. Hall (eds.), *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000) p.15).

<sup>27</sup> I. Blom, K. Hagemann and C. Hall (eds.), *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000); T. Mayer (ed.) *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (London, 2000); S. Dudink, K. Hagemann and J. Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> See P. Higate and J. Hopton, ‘War, Militarism and Masculinities’ in M. Kimmel, J. Hearn and R.W. Connell (eds.) *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (London, 2005) pp.432-444. and D.H.J. Morgan,

In Western Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, masculinity, nationalism and militarism became particularly tightly enmeshed, and reached their peak in the First World War. The interrelation of masculinity and militarism was not new to that period and there had long been a link between the values of masculinity and the values of militarism in modern Europe: the French revolution of the late eighteenth century and France's introduction of conscription popularised the notion that to fight and die for the nation was the ultimate expression of civic virtue and manly heroism.<sup>29</sup> The unprecedented scale of the First World War solidified the association and simultaneously 'deepened certain aspects' of the 'stereotype of modern manhood' by bringing 'nationalism's aggressiveness into sharp focus' and making 'man as warrior the centre of its search for a national character'.<sup>30</sup> In the British Army during the conflict, 'courage, aggression, sangfroid, rationality, chivalry, protectiveness' were amongst the values consciously nurtured amongst soldiers.<sup>31</sup> That included Irish soldiers, and wider European and British conceptions of military masculinity certainly had an impact on the manly ideals that developed in Irish republican circles.

Masculinity in the IRA must be understood as part of this wider European, and especially British, nexus of nationalist masculinity and militarism. Ireland was, however, different from its European counterparts due to its experience of colonisation. It occupied an ambiguous and 'hybrid' position within the British Empire for it acted as both

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'Theatres of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities' in H. Brod and M. Kaufman (eds.), *Theorising Masculinities* (London, 1994) pp.165-182 for general discussions of how militarism and masculinity are connected.

<sup>29</sup> For a good and succinct discussion on the 'militarisation of modern masculinity', see A. Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscription, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland 1917-39* (Farnham, 2014), pp.7-13.

<sup>30</sup> Mosse, *The Image of Man*, p.109-110.

<sup>31</sup> P. Davenport, 'Remaking the Fighting Man; Martial Masculinity and the British Army's Command Depots, 1915-1918', *Contemporary British History* 30.3 (2016), p.252.

colonised and coloniser, and was both integrated within and exploited by imperialism.<sup>32</sup> Irish revolutionary martial manliness was, therefore, reminiscent of British imperial manly ideals but also echoed the conception of manliness found amongst other anti-colonial movements. Ireland in the early twentieth century differed markedly from other British colonies for it was legally part of the United Kingdom, had MPs at Westminster and was populated by white people. Nonetheless, as in many of the century's other anti-colonial movements, to be colonised was to be emasculated, and the independence struggle was regularly formulated as a reclamation of lost manhood and thereby national honour.<sup>33</sup> In Irish republicanism, these ideas existed comfortably alongside manly values that were prominent amongst British imperialists such as adventure, chivalry and heroism.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, ideals of masculine soldierly comportment have remained fairly consistent across modern history regardless of the specific political context in which they are found. Whether a soldier in the twentieth century was fighting as part of a large-scale national army in an international conflict or as part of a small-scale, anti-colonial paramilitary movement, the ideals of manliness that he was exposed to and expected to live up to were, in many (but no means all) respects, the same. He was to be both ruthless and honourable, and willing above all to sacrifice his life for a higher cause.<sup>35</sup> Irish republicanism was just one of many modern political ideologies which posited that a man's nationalism and masculinity could be proved through his military action and

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<sup>32</sup> S. Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000), p.232; See also K. Kenny (ed.) *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2004); D. Lloyd, 'Ireland After History' in H. Schwarz and S. Ray (eds.), *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford, 2005), pp.377-395.

<sup>33</sup> See L. Lewis, 'Nationalism and Caribbean Masculinity', pp.261-281 and S. Derné, 'Men's Sexuality and Women's Subordination in Indian Nationalisms', pp.237-258 both in Mayer (ed.) *Gender Ironies of Nationalism* (London, 2000) for examples.

<sup>34</sup> Graham Dawson's *Soldier Heroes: British adventure, Empire and the imagining of masculinity* (London, 1994) provides a clear exploration of that imperial martial masculine ideal.

<sup>35</sup> In the words of George Mosse, 'the sense that true manhood must put itself into the service of a higher cause was always present' and with the First World War, 'sacrifice for a cause was now thought to be the highest virtue of what masculinity was capable, without replacing the other, by traditional virtues' (*Image of Man*, p.112).



performance. Whilst this thesis keeps these wider parallels in mind and does not subscribe to notions of Irish exceptionalism, it does consider what is distinctly Irish about the IRA's vision of manliness and the forces that shaped it.

### Gender and the Irish revolution

In her 2011 study of Protestant Unionist masculinities in Ulster during the Irish revolutionary period, Jane McGaughey argued that the lens of masculinity in Irish history 'remains a novelty'.<sup>36</sup> Whilst the field has certainly developed in the eight years since, Irish masculinities in history are still remarkably under-explored, particularly by comparison to other national historiographies.<sup>37</sup> It is notable that Irish republican masculinities have not received greater explicit scholarly attention, considering the significant masculine overtones of the republican project and culture. Various studies have explored IRA values, local Volunteer networks, the homosocial prison environment and the life stories of individual combatants, and in doing so they have covered facets of the republican martial manly ideal and masculine experience.<sup>38</sup> But the gendered nature of themes like sacrifice, armament and comradeship are rarely interrogated in such publications. Where masculinity is mentioned, it is generally done so rather cursorily: Roy Foster, for example, wrote that 'the language of hyper-masculinity might be noted' in his discussion of the republican fixation on guns but does not elaborate on it.<sup>39</sup> Studies that explicitly and consciously consider masculinity in the revolutionary period, and indeed within the history of Irish nationalism at large, remain few and far between.

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<sup>36</sup> J. McGaughey, *Ulster's Men: Protestant Unionist Masculinities and Militarisation in the North of Ireland, 1912-23* (Montreal, 2012), pp.4-5.

<sup>37</sup> British and American masculinities have been studied especially widely.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998) and Mick: *The Real Michael Collins* (London, 2006), and William Murphy's *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014).

<sup>39</sup> R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London, 2015), p.198.

Before exploring the interventions into the study of Irish nationalist masculinities that have been made in recent years, it is first worth considering the wider picture of gender and Irish nationalist historiography, particularly in relation to the revolution, and why it has tended to be sidelined in favour of more traditional approaches.

Until very recently, modern Irish historiography has been marked by a ‘deeply traditional empirical methodology which tends towards political narrative’.<sup>40</sup> This is the case for the Irish revolution as well as other periods of Irish history. Initial histories of the period tended to follow a celebratory, teleological model that characterised it as the ‘story of a people coming out of captivity’ and emphasised ‘the heroism of young, light-armed volunteers throwing themselves into battle against the mighty forces of the Crown’.<sup>41</sup> From the late 1960s, that narrative began to be seriously challenged and nuanced by so-called ‘revisionists’.<sup>42</sup> Nancy Curtin referred to the turn to revisionism as the process of ‘liberating’ and ‘cleansing’ Irish history from its ‘mythological clutter’, and revisionist historians have indeed argued that what is often called ‘revisionism’ is in fact simply modern historiography based on ‘rational debate’ and investigation rather than political or religious ‘dogma’.<sup>43</sup> The uncovering of, for instance, the sectarian atrocities committed by the IRA has disrupted the traditional narrative of republican virtuosity and

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<sup>40</sup> R. A. Barr, S. Brady and J. McGaughey ‘Ireland and Masculinities in History: An Introduction’ in R. A. Barr, S. Brady and J. McGaughey (eds.), *Ireland and Masculinities in History* (London, 2019), p.5.

<sup>41</sup> P.S. O’Hegarty quoted in D. Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1912-23* (London, 2015), p.47; See also Ferriter, *A Nation* pp.28-36 for more examples of early celebratory histories; L. Kennedy, *Unhappy the land: The Most Oppressed People Ever, the Irish?* (Dublin, 2015), p.188.

<sup>42</sup> The genesis of the debate lies in the 1930s, when historians T.W. Moody and R.D Edwards advocated a value-free ‘scientific’ history that got behind the popular myths of Ireland’s history (A. Markey, ‘Revisionisms and the Story of Ireland: From Seán O’Faolain to Roy Foster’, *Estudios Irlandese* (2005), pp.91-101; For more on the details of the revisionism debate, see D.G. Boyce and A. O’Day (eds.), *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and Revisionist Controversy* (London, 1996) and C. Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994* (Dublin, 1994); For anti-revisionist arguments see D. Fennell, ‘Against Revisionism’ in ‘National Perspectives on the Past: A Symposium’, *The Irish Review* 4 (1988), pp.20-26 and B. Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland’, *Irish Historical Studies* 26 (1989), pp.329-351.

<sup>43</sup> N. Curtin, “‘Varieties of Irishness’: Historical Revisionism, Irish Style’, *Journal of British Studies* 35.2 (1996), pp.195-6; H. Kearney, ‘The Irish and their history’ in C. Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938-1994* (Dublin, 1994), pp.249-251.

the vast majority of historians now acknowledge the ‘variety, ambivalence and unevenness’ that characterised the revolution.<sup>44</sup> Amongst revisionists and anti-revisionists alike, however, issues of gender have largely been obscured. As Linda Connolly has pointed out, for example, there was a ‘mindless omission’ of gender from Ciaran Brady’s 1994 *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism*.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, whilst this thesis draws upon the work of those that can be considered revisionist historians, it may broadly be categorised as ‘post-revisionist’ for, as will become clear, it is not concerned with ‘what actually happened’ but poses different questions about revolutionary experiences and how individuals navigated their lives and presented themselves within the constraints of restrictive gendered cultural and organisational norms and ideals.

The preoccupation with political questions and the revisionism debate saw less traditional histories of Irish nationalism and the Irish revolution arrive late on the historiographical scene. The role of nationalist women was largely omitted from mainstream historical accounts, and Margaret Ward’s 1983 *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* was the first major publication to explore women’s contribution to late nineteenth and early twentieth century Irish nationalism.<sup>46</sup> Ward continued to publish on Irish nationalist women, and more recently Senia Paseta, Sineád McCooile and numerous others have also helped to bring such women, their actions, beliefs and experiences to the fore.<sup>47</sup> These historians have provided an essential

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<sup>44</sup> R.F. Foster, ‘The Problems of Writing Irish History’, *History Today* 34.1 (1984), p.30; Peter Hart’s *The IRA and its Enemies* is the foremost publication in this regard, and revealed the brutal, sectarian side of IRA violence.

<sup>45</sup> L. Connolly, ‘The limits of “Irish Studies”: historicism, culturalism, paternalism’, *Irish Studies Review* 12.2 (2002), p.148; C. Brady, *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism* (Dublin, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> M. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London, 1983); Ward focused on three organisations, The Ladies Land League, Inghinidhe na hÉireann and Cumann na mBan.

<sup>47</sup> M. Ward and L. Ryan (eds.), *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags* (Dublin, 2014); S. Paseta, *Irish Nationalist Women* (Cambridge, 2013); L. McDiarmid, *At Home in the*

redress to a historiography that has typically under-represented and obscured the role of women, but they have not readily employed gender as a ‘category of analysis’.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, what is in fact Irish women’s history has often been labelled Irish gender history.<sup>49</sup> This leaves the nature of femininity, masculinity and the relationship between the two, uninterrogated. This issue has long been recognised – in 2002 for example, Linda Connolly warned against ‘automatically transferring a history of women into a history of gender’ and thereby producing only a ‘partial’ gender history that doesn’t take account of ‘the construction of masculinity’ – but it is only fairly recently that a more rounded and critical history of gender and Irish nationalism has begun to develop.<sup>50</sup>

In the last decade, that ‘construction of masculinity’ in Irish history has begun to be addressed. The only publication to examine masculinity specifically during the years of revolution does not, however, cover nationalist masculinities: Jane McGaughey’s *Ulster’s Men* is a study of Protestant Ulster unionist men during the years 1912 to 1923. Published in 2011, it explored the ideal type of unionist masculinity and how that ideal was projected publicly to assert an ‘unflinching strength and power’ and therefore rightful claim to dominance.<sup>51</sup> In the same year, Joseph Valente’s *The Myth of Manliness in*

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*Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916* (Dublin, 2015); M. Luddy, *Women in Ireland: 1800-1918: A Documentary History* (Cork, 1995); S. McCoole, *Guns and Chiffon: Women Revolutionaries and Kilmainham Gaol, 1916-1923* (Dublin, 1997); S. McCoole, *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years, 1900-1923* (Dublin, 2004); A. Matthews, *Renegades: Irish Republican Women, 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010); R. Taillon, *When History Was Made: The Women of 1916* (Belfast, 1996); C. McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2014); Insightful biographies of leading Irish nationalist women have also been published. See M. Ward, *Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington: A Life* (Cork, 1997); M. Ward, *Maud Gonne: Ireland’s Joan of Arc* (London, 1990); M. McAuliffe, *Margaret Skinnider* (Dublin, 2019); C. H. Fallon, *Soul of Fire: A Biography of Mary MacSwiney* (Cork, 1986); L. Lane, *Rosamund Jacob: Third Person Singular* (Dublin, 2010); Since the 1930s, there have been various biographies written about Constance Markievicz. The most recent is Lauren Arrington’s joint biography of Markievicz and her husband Casimir (*Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* (Princeton, 2016).

<sup>48</sup> S. Rose, ‘Afterword: Irish Masculinities and Gender History’ in Barr et al, *Ireland and Masculinities*, p.293.

<sup>49</sup> None of the chapters in Maryann Valiulis’s edited collection *Gender and Power in Irish History* (Dublin, 2008), for example, concern men and masculinities.

<sup>50</sup> Connolly ‘The limits of “Irish Studies”’, p.150.

<sup>51</sup> McGaughey, *Ulster’s Men*, p.13.

*Irish National Culture, 1880-1992* approached the topic from a postcolonial and literary perspective. Valente took account of Ireland's ambiguous 'metrocolonial' positioning, and how Irishmen were constrained by a 'double bind' which saw their masculinity rhetorically denied whether they were passive or resistant to their subordination.<sup>52</sup> In her comparative study of Irish and Indian masculinities published in 2012, Sikata Banerjee also considered the impact of colonialism over the period 1914-2004 and the development of a specific kind of sacrificial nationalist masculinity which she calls 'muscular nationalism'.<sup>53</sup> Whilst earlier works had considered masculinity in shorter articles or within a narrower context, these three publications are amongst what Sean Brady has referred to as the 'first wave of critically incisive' research on historical Irish masculinities.<sup>54</sup>

If we are to follow this framework, Aidan Beatty's 2016 *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism 1884-1938* constitutes a part of the 'second wave'.<sup>55</sup> The book argues that masculinity and nationalism consistently intersected in Ireland during, before and after the revolutionary period and Irish nationalism can therefore 'be understood not simply as a movement for some kind of national liberation, but also as a quasi-

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<sup>52</sup> J. Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922* (Illinois, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> S. Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004* (New York, 2012).

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, S. Benton, 'Women Disarmed: The Militarisation of Politics in Ireland 1913-23', *Feminist Review* 50 (1995), pp.148-172, P. F. McDevitt, 'Muscular Catholicism: Masculinity, Nationalism, and Gaelic Team Sports 1884-1916' *Gender and History* 9.2 (1997), pp.262-284, E. Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, 2004), J. Nugent, 'The Sword and the Prayerbook: Ideals of Authentic Manliness', *Victorian Studies* 50.4 (2008), pp.587-613 and C. Nash, 'Men Again: Irish Masculinity, Nature and Nationhood in the Early Twentieth Century' *Ecumene* 3.4 (1996), pp.427-453; The fourth book in Brady's review in Debbie Ging's *Men and Masculinities in Irish Cinema* (Dublin, 2013). The book, along with Caroline Magennis and Raymond Mullen's edited collection *Irish Masculinities: Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Dublin, 2011) and Conn Holohan and Tony Tracy's edited collection *Masculinity and Irish Popular Culture: Tiger's Tales* (Basingstoke, 2014), is an example of the way Irish masculinities have been approached from other perspectives.

<sup>55</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*; Rebecca Anne Barr, Sean Brady and Jane McGaughey's edited collection *Ireland and Masculinities in History* (London, 2019) is another important recent publication, covering a diverse themes and periods of history.

postcolonial movement for expressing a deeply felt desire for male power'.<sup>56</sup> Beatty explores conceptions of nationalist masculinity in relation a number of wide-ranging themes such as time, space, economics and language. The four publications mentioned – McGaughey's, Valente's, Banerjee's and Beatty's – each focus on representations of masculinity and do not take account of how those representations shaped the lives of actual men. Moreover, the three that concern nationalist masculinities cover relatively long periods of time, and two are comparative. This thesis is, therefore, distinctive in its specific focus on the revolution and in its concern with how ideals of manliness shaped what it meant for a revolutionary to 'be a man'. Beatty's book may tell us, for example, about the consistent importance of self-sacrifice to Irish nationalist masculinity, but it does not explain how notions of self-sacrifice influenced the everyday practices of Volunteers. By prioritising personal rather than public sources, the chapters that follow will reveal how sacrifice and other gendered elements of Irish nationalist ideology were played out in the actions, mentalities, experiences and contemporary and retrospective writings of ordinary IRA members.

Since studies of Irish nationalist masculinity have not considered men's gendered experiences, the chapters that follow are indebted to the work of historians who do not focus on gender but have departed from traditional Irish historiography in their endeavours to reveal individual experiences of the Irish revolution through the words of those who enacted or witnessed it. For a long time, serious considerations of identity and experience in Irish history were confined to biographies written about prominent individuals. Many of those publications were still, however, concerned primarily with political convictions and decision-making rather than with the individual's wider

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

mentalities and selfhood. More recently, historians have sought to uncover the experiences and psyches of ordinary participants in the revolution as well as its protagonists. Roy Foster's *Vivid Faces* is perhaps foremost in this regard and considered 'revolutionary mentalities', in order to trace the 'sea-change in Irish opinion...at the personal level of individual lives'.<sup>57</sup> As far back as 1987, Tom Garvin also attempted to 'reconstruct the mentalities of this generation rather than its political thought'.<sup>58</sup> Fearghal McGarry has similarly sought to provide a history 'from below and within' and to convey 'what it actually felt like' in his work on the Easter Rising.<sup>59</sup> Peter Hart, meanwhile, 'attempt[ed] to put a human face on [his] analysis of violence and revolution' in Cork.<sup>60</sup> William Murphy's work on imprisonment during the revolution is also worthy of note, for its attempt to reveal 'how it smelled, tasted and felt' to be a political prisoner during the revolution.<sup>61</sup> This thesis continues in the tradition of these historians, moving beyond the surface level of the revolution's political and military trajectory to consider individual revolutionaries and the forces that lay behind their actions and experiences.

## Methodology

The late historian Peter Hart described the Irish revolution as 'the best-documented modern revolution in the world'.<sup>62</sup> He noted in particular the 'extraordinary paper trail'

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<sup>57</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.xvi, xviii.

<sup>58</sup> T. Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928* (Dublin, 1987), p.v.

<sup>59</sup> F. McGarry, *The Rising: Easter 1916* (Oxford, 2010), p.4; F. McGarry, *Rebels: Voices from the Easter Rising* (London, 2012), p.xii.

<sup>60</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.18; As mentioned earlier, publications like these have had a tendency to very occasionally mention masculinity, but not to interrogate it. Fearghal McGarry for example noted in *The Rising* that revolutionary Irish republicanism 'emphasised the link between manliness, armed citizenship, and self-government (p.48) whilst Peter Hart referred to IRA members belonging to an 'exclusively masculine world' in *IRA & Enemies* (p.256).

<sup>61</sup> W. Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p.3.

<sup>62</sup> P. Hart, *The IRA at War 1916-23* (Oxford, 2003) p.5.

left by the IRA, with its wealth of source material both public and private, and both contemporaneous and retrospective.<sup>63</sup> This thesis will draw on each strand of this material but in accordance with its aim to uncover experiences of masculinity on the ground, its centres on the ego documents – the letters, diaries, memoirs, and other retrospective accounts – of actively engaged Volunteers.<sup>64</sup> It simultaneously, however, relies on public sources – contemporary republican newspapers, pamphlets, ephemera, speeches and books – in order to understand the ideal of manliness that these men were pressured to emulate.

The most valuable source for understanding the IRA's masculine ideal, and the conduct and comportment expected of Volunteers both on and off-duty, is the in-house IRA journal *An tÓglách*. The eponymous *Irish Volunteer* journal had been published from early 1914 up until the Easter Rising and *An tÓglách* was its successor, first printed in August 1918 as the 'official organ of the Irish Volunteers'.<sup>65</sup> It was published twice monthly and distributed widely amongst IRA battalions. Each issue combined 'rousing exhortatory editorials' with 'technical columns' written by senior members of IRA General Headquarters in Dublin.<sup>66</sup> It was through *An tÓglách* that Volunteers received the clearest directives about how they ought to behave and present themselves. The journal was, however, part of a wider nexus of nationalist political and cultural discourse that the revolutionaries were exposed to during, and in many cases long before, the revolutionary years. Through formal education in school, informal education at home, cultural and

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<sup>63</sup> P. Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army, 1916-1923', *The Historical Journal* 42.1 (1999), p.208.

<sup>64</sup> An ego document is 'a source or "document"—understood in the widest sense—providing an account of, or revealing privileged information about, the "self" who produced it' (M. Fulbrook and U. Rublack, 'In Relation: The 'Social Self' and Ego-Documents', *German History* 28.3 (2010), p.263).

<sup>65</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.1 (15 August 1918), p.1; Both journals are digitised and available via Ireland's military archives: See <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/an-toglach-magazine-1918-1933> and <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/the-irish-volunteer-1914-1916> for access to the editions and further information.

<sup>66</sup> C. Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2013), p.78.



political organisations as well as through literature, folklore, newspapers, speeches and ephemera, Volunteers had learnt how to play the role of the good nationalist man and soldier. The ideal of manliness found across these discourses was a relatively consistent one that valued courage, honour, sacrifice and brotherhood. An influential figure in shaping and propounding those ideals in the years preceding the revolution was Patrick Pearse, whose many writings and speeches fervently advocated the righteousness of sacrifice and its potential to restore Ireland's manhood.<sup>67</sup> After his death in 1916, Pearse's words and ideas were commonly recited both publicly and privately, thus reproducing and reinforcing his vision of righteous Irish masculinity.

The impact that such a vision had on the mentalities and experiences of individual Volunteers can be ascertained through a critical reading of their public and private writings, which constitute the majority of the thesis's source base. The collections at the National Library of Ireland and the University College Dublin archives include a wealth of contemporary sources written by senior as well as rank-and-file IRA members: formal and informal correspondence, diaries, and a number of autograph books from the period's prisons and internment camps where incarcerated men wrote short messages and rhymes for their comrades. Though they were ostensibly private, these sources could be shared publicly for propaganda purposes: the last letters written by men ahead of their executions are the clearest example of this practice.<sup>68</sup> Retrospective personal accounts were more explicitly written with an audience in mind. Almost as soon as the Civil War ended, IRA memoirs recounting the revolutionary years began to appear. They sold well, and a small but steady stream of former Volunteers published accounts of their

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<sup>67</sup> P. Pearse, *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork, 2012). Pearse was one of the leaders of the Easter Rising, and read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic outside the General Post Office on the first day of the rebellion. He was amongst the 16 men executed by the British government in its aftermath.

<sup>68</sup> See chapters 2 and 4.

experiences in the decades that followed. In doing so, they followed in the tradition of Irish nationalist autobiography.<sup>69</sup> That tradition had seen prominent Irish nationalist men in the nineteenth century produce accounts of their experiences that simultaneously functioned as polemics against British rule. Prison memoirs in particular had long been an important republican sub-genre since William Steel Dickson's account of his experience as a prisoner in the aftermath of the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798.<sup>70</sup> Such publications tended to 'draw a parallel between nation and self', and Irish nationalist autobiographies in the twentieth century followed in their footsteps as the authors 'shape[d] themselves around the history of the nation to such an extent that it became a standard element of the genre'.<sup>71</sup> Both nineteenth century and twentieth century nationalist autobiographies were widely read in Ireland, and became an important means of transmitting republican doctrine in a compelling way.

Like their predecessors, IRA memoirs were also often written to entertain as much as to inform. In their peddling of the accepted republican narrative whereby Volunteers were nothing but righteous, united and heroic freedom fighters, they could often read like a typical adventure novel.<sup>72</sup> John Regan has sardonically referred to these as the 'with-

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<sup>69</sup> For detail on the history of Irish nationalism and autobiography see L. Harte (ed.) *Modern Irish Autobiography: Self, Nation and Society* (Basingstoke, 2007); L. Harte (ed.), *A History of Irish Autobiography* (Cambridge, 2018), in particular Matthew Kelly's chapter 'Irish Political Autobiography from Wolfe Tone to Ernie O'Malley', pp.100-116, and B. Schrank, 'Studies of the Self: Irish Autobiography Writing and the Discourses of Colonialism and Independence', *Auto/Biography* 9 (1994) pp.260-275.

<sup>70</sup> W. Murphy, 'Narratives of Confinement: Fenians, Prisoners and Writing, 1867-1916' in F. McGarry and J. McConnel (eds.), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), p.161; John Mitchel's, Tom Clarke's and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's published accounts of imprisonment were also commonly found on the bookshelves of Irish nationalist households (J. Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (London, 1854); T. J. Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life* (Dublin, 1922) [chapters were released in Irish Freedom in 1912 and 1913]; J. O'Donovan Rossa, *O'Donovan Rossa's Prison Life: Six Years in Six English Prisons* (New York, 1874).

<sup>71</sup> C. Lynch *Irish Autobiography: Stories of Self in the Narrative of a Nation* (Bern, 2009), p.2, 23; Elleke Boehmer has shown that this is a wider phenomenon in postcolonial autobiography written by men (*Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (Manchester, 2005) pp.66-87).

<sup>72</sup> Frances Flanagan has noted that IRA memoirs often 'followed the contours of a Kipling adventure story' and Dan Breen's ghostwritten *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin, 1924) was 'mistakenly advertised' as fiction in at least one newspaper (F. Flanagan, 'Stories of the Irish Revolution' in J. Crowley, D. O Drisceoil and M. Murphy (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (New York, 2018), p.902).

my-comrades-behind-the-ditch-in-the-fight-for-Irish-freedom literary genre'.<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, they commonly romanticise events and obscure or minimise the darker side of the revolutionary project, most notably the killing of civilians.<sup>74</sup> As with any retrospective account, such publications were also affected by issues of memory and constrained by the context in which they were written.<sup>75</sup> A feeling of nostalgia comes through many IRA memoirs, as men looked back fondly upon a time of camaraderie and adventure 'when they had belonged to something nobler and greater than themselves'.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, only a very small percentage of former Volunteers chose to, or felt able to, write about their experiences. In 1936, renowned IRA officer Ernie O'Malley published his highly successful memoir *On Another Man's Wound* which detailed his War of Independence experience in exceptional detail.<sup>77</sup> In the same year, Joseph Cripps, an active Volunteer in the Dublin Brigade from 1916 to 1923, wrote in his Military Service Pension application, 'For obvious reasons I never kept a record of my activities and I am now at a loss to give full (and in many cases even part) particulars of the various operations in which I was engaged'.<sup>78</sup> Men like Cripps were more common than men like O'Malley, and the vast majority did not think, desire or have the capability to share their experiences publicly. A significant number of former Volunteers did, however, contribute

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<sup>73</sup> J. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1921-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1999) p.xv.

<sup>74</sup> Flanagan, 'Stories of the Irish Revolution', p.902; D. Ferriter, 'Introduction' in B. Ó Conchubhair, *Dublin's Fighting Story 1916-21: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.19; Louise Ryan has noted that the memoirs contain 'no mention of sexual encounters with women. Instead their books emphasise brotherhood, comradeship, discipline and chivalry towards women' ('"Drunken Tans": Representations of Sex and Violence in the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921)', *Feminist Review* 66.1 (2000), p.86).

<sup>75</sup> P. Summerfield, *Histories of the Self: Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (Abingdon, 2019), pp.78-105; D. Carlson, 'Autobiography' in M. Dobson and B. Ziemann (eds.), *Reading Primary Sources: The interpretation of texts from nineteenth- and twentieth-century history* (Abingdon, 2009), pp.175-191; For specific work on cultural memory and Ireland see I. McBride, *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001) and O. Frawley (ed.), *Memory Ireland (vol. I): History and Modernity* (New York, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> P. Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins* (London, 2006), p.425.

<sup>77</sup> E. O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Dublin, 1936).

<sup>78</sup> NLI MS 22,117 (i), J.A. Cripps's introductory letter as part of his application for a Military Service Pension (2 July 1936).

statements to the Bureau of Military History (BMH) which were only to be made public after they had died.

The BMH was established in 1947 with the intention ‘to assemble and co-ordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the movement for Independence from the formation of the Irish Volunteers on 25th November 1913, to the [signing of the Truce on] 11th July 1921’.<sup>79</sup> Over a ten year period, 1,773 men and women contributed statements to the collection; the majority were conducted as interviews which were then written up by the investigating staff, but some witnesses wrote their own statements.<sup>80</sup> There are numerous methodological flaws with the BMH, which Fearghal McGarry has summarised:

The statements describe not the events of 1912-21 but the witnesses’ flawed memories of them from a remove of several decades; their recollections were inevitably distorted by subjectivity, the passage of time, the accumulation of subsequent knowledge, and the impact of later events including, most problematically, the Civil War, which bitterly divided Irish revolutionaries for decades or, in many cases, lifetimes.<sup>81</sup>

Moreover, many anti-Treaty figures refused to engage with a ‘state-sponsored historical project’, there was a clear selection bias in favour of republican men, and participants were encouraged to focus on particular topics.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Director of the Bureau of Military History (1957) quoted in the guide to the Bureau of Military History, available at: <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/about/guide-to-the-collection/>.

<sup>80</sup> The statements were opened for historians to access in 2003, after the last contributor had died.

<sup>81</sup> McGarry, *The Rising*, p.5; A. Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p.6; D. Ferriter, “in such deadly earnest”, *The Dublin Review* 12 (2003); E. Morrison, ‘Bureau of Military History witness statements as sources for the Irish Revolution’, *Bureau of Military History* (undated) available at: <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/about/historical-essays/>.

Both published memoirs and the BMH witness statements can be considered forms of autobiography because, broadly speaking, autobiography is retrospective writing about the self and about personal experience. It is, however, a complicated genre, sitting on 'the borderline between fact and fiction, the personal and the social, the popular and the academic, the everyday and the literary'.<sup>83</sup> The elements of 'fiction' and 'the literary' in particular have led some scholars to question the utility of autobiography for historical research. Certainly, both the BMH and IRA memoirs are not to be considered representative nor to be accurate renderings of what happened during the Irish revolution.

Such retrospective sources are, nonetheless, highly useful for a thesis which seeks to understand the construction of identity and subjectivities rather than the detail of events and their causes. They may be unreliable in their retelling of events, but memoirs and witness statements are valuable as mediated presentations of selfhood: they tell us how an individual wanted their identity, their actions and their motivations to be understood by others as well as how those things connected to wider social and cultural norms. Selfhood is, by nature, constructed by its surrounding and through its performance for different audiences: as James Hinton has summarised, 'in making masks appropriate for the performance of our various roles, we make ourselves'.<sup>84</sup> In autobiography, selfhood can be carefully constructed for the reading audience through the written or spoken word. The decisions that an individual makes about which topics to cover, details to include and language to use work to convey an intended image of selfhood. That image cannot be divorced from the wider cultural and social environment in which it was forged. As Joan Scott's influential work has argued, subjects 'are constituted through

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<sup>83</sup> T. Cosslet, C. Lury and P. Summerfield, 'Introduction' in T. Cosslet, C. Lury and P. Summerfield (eds.), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories and Methods* (London, 2001), p.1.

<sup>84</sup> J. Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass-Observation in the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford, 2010), pp.4-5.

experience' and 'historical agency' cannot therefore 'happen beyond the discursive frameworks within which actors operate and on which they draw to express themselves'.<sup>85</sup> Ego documents therefore provide an insight into individuals and their relationship with the 'social, political, cultural, gendered, racial and sexual prescriptions and notions of "normalcy"' that pervade the world they inhabit.<sup>86</sup> As Mary Fulbrook and Ulinka Rublack have articulately summarised, the purpose of reading personal documents as sources

is not to recover a more authentic non-discursive voice of subjects, but to use personal narratives to see as far as possible how people worked their way through dimensions of norms and relationships, through conflicting demands, ambivalent fears and other emotions, how men and women gave these meaning, what narrative forms this took and what this meant in a particular context.<sup>87</sup>

A critical analysis of ego documents is, therefore, the most effective means for the historian to decipher how the identities, experiences and memories of IRA members were coloured by the ideals and discourses that surrounded them. This is a thesis that, in the words of Penny Summerfield, 'treats subjectivity seriously' for it 'respects the post-structuralist idea that narratives of the self are shaped within specific contexts by prevailing discourses'.<sup>88</sup> In their contemporary letters and diaries and their retrospective memoirs and witness statements, Volunteers presented versions of themselves within the bounds of what was expected of them as men and as soldiers. In doing so, they offer a glimpse into their subjectivities, and the inextricable entwinement of those subjectivities with gendered norms and discourses.

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<sup>85</sup> J. Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience' *Critical Inquiry* 17.4 (1991), p.779; P. Summerfield, 'Concluding Thoughts: performance, the self, and women's history', *Women's History Review* 22.2 (2013), p.349.

<sup>86</sup> S. L. Dyvik, "'Valhalla rising": Gender, embodiment and experience in military memoirs', *Security Dialogue* 47.2 (2016), p.136.

<sup>87</sup> Fulbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation', p.271.

<sup>88</sup> P. Summerfield, *Histories of the Self: Personal Narratives and Historical Practice* (London, 2019), p.99.

In his introduction to Tom Barry's memoir *Guerrilla Days in Ireland*, Michael Costello contended that 'the real Tom Barry speaks throughout; fearless, aggressive, assertive and energetic. There is no false modesty, no straining after effect and, above all, no gloss based on hindsight'.<sup>89</sup> This thesis comes from the starkly different perspective, where no ego document is taken as a 'transparent psychological record'.<sup>90</sup> Whether contemporary or retrospective, the sources are read with an awareness of the processes of their production. They are presentations of self which are shaped by societal norms, local pressures and a compulsion to conform.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, when read alongside the popular rhetoric of republican martial manliness, such ego documents reveal the ways that the experiences and identities of Irish Volunteers, and their contemporary and retrospective presentation, were constrained and conditioned by a compulsion to meet the masculine ideal.

This thesis is not about the details of military operations and planning or about successes and failures, but about perceptions, identities and experiences. It is about understanding the personal, the affective, identity, social mores and relations. It is a history of the IRA from within, that explores individuals, their mentalities and their experiences through the lens of masculinity. It ultimately asks, and seeks to answer, how the identities, actions and recollections of Irish Volunteers were shaped by dominant discourses of republican manliness.

### Thesis outline

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<sup>89</sup> M. Costello, 'Introduction' (1981) in T. Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Cork, 2013), p.7.

<sup>90</sup> Roper, 'Between the Psyche and the Social', p.252.

<sup>91</sup> Fullbrook and Rublack, 'In Relation'; M. Hewitson, 'I Witnesses': Soldiers, Selfhood and Testimony in Modern Wars', *German History* 28.3 (2010) pp.310-325; M. Evans, *Missing Persons: The Impossibility of auto/biography* (London, 1999).

The thesis is organised thematically across five chapters. The first explains what the ideals of Irish republican manliness were, and therefore provides the framing for the remaining four chapters which explore how those ideals shaped the revolutionary mentalities and actions, and post-revolutionary writings, of IRA members. The second chapter considers the public performance of masculinity, the third and fourth concern the regulation and management of emotions, and the fifth explores notions and experiences of brotherhood and comradeship.

Chapter One draws on public sources to produce a definition of the ideal of Irish republican martial manliness. It considers specific directives made to Volunteers about the requirements of their role, as well as the wider codes of republican manliness and the forces that influenced them. Being an 'Irishman' was conceived not as a birth-right but as something to be achieved by meeting a set of masculine requirements: courage, honour, fidelity, vigour, discipline, respectability, and restraint. The picture that emerges is of a republican martial manliness that was as tough and courageous as it was respectable and modest, and that found its ultimate expression in sacrifice for the cause. That manly ideal echoed conceptions of Irish nationalist manliness in the past and was clearly influenced by Catholic and Gaelic traditions and principles. It was also shaped by a desire to disprove disparaging, feminising British stereotypes about the state of the Irish nation and its men. Whilst the values of manliness found amongst Irish republicans have many parallels with those of other nations and causes, this chapter will detail what was specifically Irish and specifically republican about IRA masculinity. In outlining the kind of masculinity Volunteers were expected, and felt duty bound, to perform, it will pave the way for the remaining four chapters.

Chapter Two focuses on how Volunteers publicly performed the masculine ideal through their collective and individual appearances and behaviours. By analysing



contemporary and retrospective first-person Volunteer accounts, as well as public and private descriptions of the behaviours and comportment of other Volunteers, it explores how the role of the manly soldier was enacted through words, actions and appearances. It considers the contemporary enactment of manliness, as well as the retrospective presentation of events to emphasise the manliness of the IRA. The organisation had a carefully curated self-image, and the way that Volunteers looked – their bodies, their uniform and their comportment – was important in conveying their manliness to outsiders and in instilling a feeling of manliness amongst recruits. Endurance was also an important physical performance of masculinity which drew on notions of manly sacrifice. Both the muscular male body poised for fighting, and the emaciated and suffering hunger striking body were important symbols of republican masculinity that displayed an individual's courage and commitment to the cause. They also each had propagandistic value. Performances of masculinity amongst IRA members were, however, not only about constructing a desired public image; as a matter of pride, individuals also sought to prove their manly credentials to their peers, and this could manifest in risk-taking and acts of bravado. The chapter will consider the dimensions of republican masculine pride through a close reading of the events of Michael Collins's death. More broadly, the centrality of sacrifice in republican masculine culture meant that the rituals preceding and succeeding death became highly performative. The fact that a Volunteer had died for the cause of independence, his words and actions as he faced execution or death by starvation, the commemoration of his death and the various stage-managed funerals of the revolutionary period, were each means by which a specifically republican form of masculinity could be projected.

Chapters Three and Four consider the regulation, management, concealment and expression of emotions amongst IRA members. They draw on the field of the history of

emotions and use the lens of masculinity to ascertain how Volunteers navigated their emotions in a turbulent and taxing period of their lives and in the face of a strict emotional regime. Both make use of public sources as a means to discern popular understandings and the regulation of men's emotions, but they primarily employ ego documents in order to understand how that regulation manifested in individual practices. Chapter Three considers the rhetoric of emotional restraint and mastery that ran through IRA discourses, before exploring the pressure that Volunteers felt to live up to the restrained, stoic model of martial manliness and the resulting avoidance, concealment and management of feeling. Expressions of fear and sadness were the most clearly at odds with manly ideals, and therefore detrimental to the successful performance of masculinity amongst Volunteers. There was, however, some malleability to the emotional regime; an emotional expression's designation as acceptable or unacceptable was heavily contingent on context. This is the primary argument of Chapter 4. It explores the way that emotions could break through the codes of masculine emotional restraint, as well as moments when particular emotional expressions could become congruent with narratives of heroic, sacrificial masculinity. As well as the negative emotions of fear and sadness, it also considers the enjoyment and thrill that being in the IRA could engender. The chapters are intended to be read together, for in tandem they reveal how Volunteers navigated their emotional responses to what were often traumatic experiences through a culture and military tradition that expected men to be largely imperturbable and restrained.

The final chapter considers the relationships that existed amongst Volunteers, and how they were shaped and constrained by ideals of brotherhood, camaraderie and unity. The IRA was a homosocial organisation where men were separated from women and shared a military experience that made them dependent upon one another. Military

friendships are, in many cases, exceptional: soldiers share 'a bond forged under stress, in the shadows of death, and including extremely high thrills'.<sup>92</sup> In the case of IRA guerrillas, those close bonds were compounded by the fact that many were fighting alongside men they had known before the revolution. The social reality of an all-male group in a high-risk setting combined with a pervasive romantic rhetoric of brotherhood, camaraderie and collectivity to produce an environment where relationships between and unity amongst men were highly valued. The masculine community, real and idealised, was essential to the Volunteering enterprise. The first half of the chapter explores discourses of manly brotherhood, the comforting and sustaining effects of comradeship, and the pressure to perform harmonious brotherhood despite more nuanced realities. It focuses in particular on prisons as a confined, homosocial site where the pressures of these ideals became especially acute. It therefore draws on an array of sources produced in prisons or about the prison experience, as well as a wider set of contemporary and retrospective accounts that provide insight into conceptions and experiences of brotherhood and friendship amongst Volunteers. The second half of the chapter considers the destabilisation and breakdown of brotherhood that came with the Anglo-Irish Treaty and ensuing Civil War, and how Volunteers confronted the loss of friends and the new reality which saw former comrades become enemies. These facets of the divide were not readily discussed by Volunteers at the time, so this section of the chapter draws primarily on retrospective accounts of the post-1921 experience.

Together, these chapters bring the undercurrent of masculinity in the IRA to the fore. They problematise the dominant republican narrative that existed during and after the revolution which presented Volunteers as nothing but fearless, honourable heroes

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<sup>92</sup> D. Kaplan, *The Men We Loved: Male Friendship and Nationalism in Israeli Culture* (New York, 2006), p.98.

ready to sacrifice themselves for a great cause by revealing the complex human processes, contradictions and decision-making that lay beneath it. The young militants of the revolution were faced with the difficult task of fighting, suffering and dying for the cause, all whilst maintaining an unfaltering courage, stoicism, respectability and camaraderie. IRA propagandists may have depicted Volunteers as naturally and inherently manly fighters willing to do whatever it took to achieve Irish independence, but a great deal of thought, effort and individual negotiation lay behind their performances of masculinity. This thesis explores that dimension of what it meant to be an Irish Volunteer, whilst engaging with wider questions about the experience of masculinity and its convergence with nationalism, militarism, the performance of identity, emotions and relationships. Ultimately, it demonstrates that the Volunteer experience, and the way that experience was presented at the time and afterwards, was heavily mediated by the constraints of a pervasive and stringent manly ideal.

## Chapter One: The Ideals of Irish Republican Martial Manliness

The men who made up the ranks of the Irish Volunteers and IRA had a lot to live up to. The revolutionary period was marked by a culture of masculinity where an idealised conception of martial manliness provided a set of rules and a set of constraints upon the lives of Volunteers. The IRA devised a particular set of stipulations regarding the conduct of its members, but those stipulations were firmly embedded within and cannot be divorced from the wider ideology and culture of Irish republicanism. This chapter will explore the specific characteristics that Volunteers were expected and pressured to exhibit and how these characteristics related to contemporary notions of manliness, whilst maintaining an awareness of the wider advanced nationalist backdrop against which this all took place. It will provide a blueprint of what was required to 'be men' fighting and suffering for the republican cause whilst the chapters that follow will illustrate how these idealised traits of manliness shaped the subjectivities and experiences of Volunteers.

Ideals of martial manliness were not new for the revolutionary period. Rather, long-held notions of Irish nationalist masculine duty and performance were realised first in the spectacle of the Easter Rising, and then again in the sustained warfare of the War of Independence. The fratricidal strife of the Civil War period crushed the vision of a united brotherhood of Irishmen, but ideals of manly comportment remained prevalent on each side of the divide. Across the period, the vision of masculinity fostered within militant Irish republicanism and impressed upon Volunteers was necessarily malleable, ebbing and flowing to adapt to the varying circumstances in which Volunteers found themselves. There remained, however, an overarching and consistent set of principles that republican soldiers were expected to adhere to and promote. Through the in-house

*Irish Volunteer* and *An tÓglách* journals, other nationalist publications, IRA memoranda, speeches, instructions from seniors and conversations with peers, Volunteers were provided with a model of the ideal republican soldier.

The characteristics that made up that model were widely respected amongst leading Volunteers both at the time and in retrospect. In his witness statement, former IRA commandant Seán Moylan gave the following admiring account of his comrade Seán Nunan:

Men such as he were an inspiration, the backbone and real driving force of the IRA. He was wholly sincere, sought no advantage for himself...only a sheer sense of duty brought him into the Volunteers. Once a member, he dismissed all thought of home and of personal ambition and set out thoroughly and painstakingly to perfect himself and those he led for the work they had to do...A strict disciplinarian, he had developed an esprit de corps among his men that was far more effective than any rigid regulation. For no day was too long, no task too arduous, no hardship too great to be borne...The shining example of his courage, earnestness and energy was an inspiration to all his associates. His code of self-discipline was the basis of his success.<sup>1</sup>

Moylan's words encapsulate the confluence of courage, selflessness, duty, devotion and discipline that made up the ideal of martial masculinity imagined in militant republican circles. He may not have specifically labelled Nunan's qualities as masculine, but his description is undoubtedly one of martial manliness.<sup>2</sup> The traits that he valued and admired in his friend mirror those that were propounded amongst the IRA more broadly. Ideals of Irish republican masculinity were, moreover, tightly enmeshed within and

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<sup>1</sup> S. Moylan, *Seán Moylan: In His Own Words: His memoir of the Irish War of Independence with a selection of speeches and poems* (Cork, 2004), pp.75-6. This is a published version of his Bureau of Military History Witness Statement.

<sup>2</sup> This is in keeping with contemporary language use, as discussed on p.10.

expressed through the wider nexus of advanced nationalist discourse. Directives as to how a Volunteer ought to conduct himself and exhortations of the masculine ideal could be made explicit in the IRA's own publications, but they were also communicated more subtly through the wider rhetoric of Irish republicanism. As this chapter will illustrate, the emerging message that encouraged Volunteers to display a courageous but restrained martial manliness was, in each case, consistent.

### Who were the Irish Volunteers?

Before going on to explore the formulation of masculinity envisioned within the Irish Volunteers, it is first worth outlining the social profile of those who made up their ranks and the way that the army functioned. In his pioneering study of the social composition of the IRA, Peter Hart concluded that the organisation was 'composed largely of unpropertied, unmarried, young men of the middling classes, increasingly disproportionately dominated by urban, skilled and socially mobile activists'.<sup>3</sup> The majority were also young and Catholic.<sup>4</sup> For many, the decision to join the Volunteers, both initially from 1913 and in the wave that joined after the Rising, was based as much on social and cultural forces and trends as on any ideological conviction.<sup>5</sup> Dan Keating, the last living IRA member who died in 2007, had said simply of his recruitment that 'it

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<sup>3</sup> P. Hart, 'The Social Structure of the Irish Republican Army, 1916-1923', *The Historical Journal* 42.1 (1999), p.207.

<sup>4</sup> J. Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), p.175.

<sup>5</sup> J. Augusteijn, 'Motivation: Why did they Fight for Ireland? The Motivation of Volunteers in the Revolution' in J. Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.103; D. Ferriter, *A Nation and Not A Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (London, 2015), p.9; Fearghal McGarry has summarised that 'a diverse range of factors contributed to the formation of their political identity: family background and childhood influences; local and communal influences; intergenerational tensions; education; popular traditions of Irish history; print culture; and associational activity. But there is little discussion of ideology in the [witness] statements: beyond an activist core, few mention the appeal of Griffith's dual monarchy, Connolly's socialism, or republican thought' ('1916 and Irish Republicanism: Between Myth and History' in J. Horne and E. Madigan (eds.), *Towards Commemoration: Ireland in War and Revolution 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2014), p.49).

was the thing to do at the time - there was a wave and you got caught up in that'.<sup>6</sup> Volunteer units were often built around 'familial and neighbourhood networks' and many joined up as part of a group rather than individually.<sup>7</sup> They had often grown up in similar circumstances (in many cases as siblings, cousins or close friends), been educated in the same schools and socialised in the same groups, consumed the same culture and literature, and shared religious beliefs. In Peter Hart's words, 'the "boys" who...played, worked and grew up together became the "boys" who drilled, marched and raided together'.<sup>8</sup>

In the IRA's military structures, the members in a given 'village or urban neighbourhood' made up a company, a number of companies formed a battalion and a number of battalions constituted a brigade.<sup>9</sup> According to John Borgonovo, the closest estimate is that the IRA had 65 brigades and 297 battalions by the time the truce was declared in the summer of 1921.<sup>10</sup> The IRA was, of course, associated with Dáil Éireann and soldiers swore an oath of allegiance to the Dáil from 1920, but the revolutionary government did not formally control the revolutionary army.<sup>11</sup> There may have been a significant degree of crossover between the two, with for instance Michael Collins acting as both Minister for Finance and IRA Adjutant General, but the IRA was largely autonomous.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, whilst GHQ in Dublin sought to exert control over local IRA units, most functioned independently when it came to electing officers and planning

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<sup>6</sup> D. Keating quoted in Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.185.

<sup>7</sup> Hart, 'The Social Structure', p.207.

<sup>8</sup> P. Hart, *The I.R.A. & Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), p.269.

<sup>9</sup> J. Borgonovo, "'Army Without Banners": the Irish Republican Army, 1920-21' in J. Borgonovo, J. Crowley, D. O Drisceoil and M. Murphy (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (New York, 2018), p.390.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> M.G. Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992), pp.33-42.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid; Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.213; D. Fitzpatrick, ' Militarism in Ireland 1900-1922' in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery (eds), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), p.402.



operations.<sup>13</sup> In the words of Maryann Valiulis, the revolutionary period was dominated by 'individual groups of Volunteers who, having received some rudimentary training and some sense of discipline, acted on their own accord'.<sup>14</sup> Whilst over 100,000 men were members of the Irish Volunteers at some point during the revolutionary years, many never engaged in combat: Michael Collins estimated that the IRA 'never had more than 3000 active members during the War of Independence'.<sup>15</sup> In Cork's Behagh Volunteer unit, for example, only one fifth fought in the War of Independence and one third of those who remained after 1921 fought in the Civil War.<sup>16</sup> Between the active guerrilla fighters who made up the Flying Columns and the inactive men who were Volunteers almost in name only, was a majority who did not directly engage in violence but participated in drills and marches and supported the Columns by carrying messages, taking up guard duty and so on.<sup>17</sup> It is the actively engaged Volunteers that take precedence in the chapters that follow, for they were the men who were most clearly constrained by ideals of martial manly comportment as well as the men that were most likely to share accounts of their revolutionary lives.

### Becoming a 'true Irishman'

In the republican discourse of the revolutionary period, both within and beyond its military organisations, references were made to 'true', 'genuine' or 'real' Irishmen. Rather than constituting a simple label to denote men of Irish heritage born in Ireland, the status of 'Irishman' was formulated as a title to be achieved through the display of particular

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p.42.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p.38; Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.18.

<sup>15</sup> C. Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland: Popular Militancy 1917-1923* (Cork, 2009), p.2.

<sup>16</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.224.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

traits and values.<sup>18</sup> 'Irishman' became a convenient byword to represent the ideal manly characteristics of courage, stoicism, commitment and honour.

This conception of masculine identity lent itself to republican propaganda, as Irish manhood could be rhetorically bestowed on those who advanced the cause through toil and sacrifice and denied to those who opposed it or held it back. The men of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) who campaigned for Home Rule using constitutional methods were particular targets for gendered denigration.<sup>19</sup> In his work on Sinn Féin's deployment of notions of masculinity during the 1917 East Clare by-election, Aidan Beatty has illustrated the way in which old speeches made by the IPP's leader John Redmond were 'mined for nationalist sentiment' then described as 'What John Redmond Said When He Was An Irishman'.<sup>20</sup> The status of Irishman was therefore not static; it was acquired or lost depending on an individual's expressed behaviours and beliefs. For Sinn Féin propagandists, Redmond had ceased to be a true nationalist and therefore had ceased to be an Irishman, signifying an inauthenticity and illegitimacy in his claims to represent the nation.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Patrick McDevitt has identified this formulation of Irish manhood in his work on the intersections of nationalism, masculinity and sport in the early years of the Gaelic Athletic Association – a sporting organisation designed to manage and promote Gaelic games – where to be deemed an 'Irishman' an individual had to possess and cultivate 'physical and mental qualities that distinguished the Irish man from both women and British men' ('Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports, 1884-1916', *Gender and History* 9.2 (2002), p. 279).

<sup>19</sup> Those who served in the British Army during the First World War received similar attacks on their gendered national identity. In 1914, it was proclaimed in *The Irish Volunteer* that 'not a single man worthy of the name of Irishman will join the army of England no matter what fancy name that army may be given' (*The Irish Volunteer* vol.I. no.35 (3 October 1914), p.6).

<sup>20</sup> A. Beatty, 'Masculinity and Nationhood in the East Clare By-Election, 1917' *Éire-Ireland* 51 (2016), pp.152-3; Beatty has also identified that during the 1918 general election that provided Sinn Féin with its mandate, voters were encouraged to 'Be Men and Vote for Freedom!' and to 'Vote for Manly Independent Policy' (*Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938* (London, 2016), p.38).

<sup>21</sup> The republican ideal of manly duty was not uncontested and Redmond himself peddled a different conception of martial Irish manhood in his calls for Irishmen to join the British Army and fight in the First World War. He stated that 'it would be a disgrace for ever to our country and a reproach to her manhood...if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and to shrinking from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which has distinguished our race all through its history' (available at: <https://www.historyireland.com/volume-22/john-redmonds-woodenbridge-speech/>).

Similar devices were deployed by each side in the Civil War to deny their opponents' claims to legitimacy. The short-lived anti-Treaty journal *Nationality War* published a piece in 1922 claiming that the Free State army were 'not Irishmen' for they were 'trying to retain Ireland for the Empire': 'misguided they may be; deluded they may be – all that perhaps, but never Irish'.<sup>22</sup> The writer concluded, 'you may call these men in uniform Irish if you want. But while they are the representatives of British rule in Ireland they will be opposed by real Irishmen and true Irishmen to the very end'.<sup>23</sup> The pro-Treaty *Freeman's Journal*, meanwhile, was, according to Diarmaid Ferriter, deemed to have gone 'too far' when it claimed that Éamon de Valera was 'ready to sacrifice the country' and had 'not the instinct of the Irishman in his blood'.<sup>24</sup> This comment was racialised as well as gendered, taking aim at the fact that de Valera was born in New York and had a Spanish father.<sup>25</sup> In each of these cases, claims to both manliness and Irishness were, in tandem, called into question as a means to deny credibility.

The reformulated category of 'Irishman' and its associated characteristics could act as a yardstick by which to determine the calibre of an individual. A commander in the Cork IRA, Pete Kearney, was apparently 'never concerned with a man's origin or viewpoint' when assessing the worth of his peers. He only asked, 'Is he a good Irishman?'.<sup>26</sup> At least in republican rhetorical parlance, 'Irishman' had transitioned from an indicator of heritage to an indicator of merit.<sup>27</sup> Whilst Kearney employed 'Irishman' as

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<sup>22</sup> NLI MS 44,056/3, *Nationality War* no.12 (5 August 1922).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid; This method of deriding opponents had a longer lineage amongst Irish republicans: Catriona Kennedy has noted that the United Irishmen of the late eighteenth century employed the 'tactic of impugning the manliness of those who did not support the Irish cause' (*What Can Women Give But Tears?: Gender, Politics and Irish National Identity in the 1790s* (PhD thesis) (University of York, 2004), p.56).

<sup>24</sup> Ferriter, *Nation and not a Rabble*, p.254.

<sup>25</sup> M. E. Daly, 'De Valera's Historical Memory' in O. Frawley (ed.), *Memory Ireland vol. I: History and Modernity* (New York, 2011), p.145.

<sup>26</sup> NLI MS 49,487/7 Tribute to Peter Kearney entitled 'He radiated happiness, kindness and sincerity' by Lilian Corey [undated].

<sup>27</sup> This framework was not uniquely Irish and has, unsurprisingly, been common in civil wars where each group seeks to define themselves as inherently different to the other despite their shared heritage. In the

a code by which to judge others, Batt O'Connor used it as a standard by which to keep himself in check. Michael Collins was, to many, the embodiment of the 'spirit of militant Irish nationalism', and O'Connor wrote in the final paragraph of his 1929 autobiography that their friendship had been the 'privilege' of his life: 'If I were ever tempted to fall away from my idea of what a son of Ireland should be, there would rise before me the image of that glorious character, and what he would expect of me'.<sup>28</sup> The image of Collins's masculine stature, and the thought of his expectations, provided O'Connor with a prototype of the ideal Irishman and the motivation to meet its requirements.

Similarly, the desire to achieve the status of authentic Irishman could motivate Volunteers to commit daring pursuits. Michael 'The' O'Rahilly was a prominent Irish Volunteer who had opposed the organisation of the 1916 rebellion but decided to join his comrades on Easter week nonetheless.<sup>29</sup> He was then to lose his life whilst leading a party of men out of the burning General Post Office. According to the account of Joe Good, O'Rahilly's comrades were at first reluctant to join him in the charge out to the waiting British guns but he then shouted 'Are you Irishmen, that you won't charge?' to which 'some men stepped forward more promptly'.<sup>30</sup> By questioning their status as Irishmen, he was able to shame the soldiers into action.<sup>31</sup> Then, by risking their lives in the face of gunfire, they were able to prove their manliness.

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Spanish Civil War, for example, 'both sides excluded the other from being considered as true Spaniards' (See X. Núñez Seixas, 'Nations in arms against the invader: on nationalist discourses during the Spanish civil war' in C. Ealham and M. Richards (eds.), *The Splintering of Spain: Cultural History and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Cambridge, 2005), pp.45-67).

<sup>28</sup> P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin: How It Won It, And How It Used It* (Dublin, 1924), p.137; B. O'Connor, *With Michael Collins in the Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 1929), p.195.

<sup>29</sup> O'Rahilly 'played a leading role in persuading MacNeill to call off the rising', but when the rebels mobilised on Easter Monday he joined them, stating 'I helped to wind up the clock, so I might as well hear it strike' (P. Maume, 'Michael Joseph O'Rahilly' in J. McGuire & J. Quinn (eds.), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (2009)[ available at: <https://dib-cambridge-org.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6975&searchClicked=clicked&quickadvsearch=yes#>]).

<sup>30</sup> J. Good, *Enchanted by Dreams: The Journal of a Revolutionary* (Kerry, 1996), p.56.

<sup>31</sup> The avoidance of shame has motivated soldiers to engage in dangerous action across modern warfare. As Anders Ahlbäck has summarised, 'the cultural connection between the warrior role and masculine

An individual's status as an Irishman had to be continually and overtly asserted in action in order to be maintained, and the need for perpetual reassertion was heightened in the military sphere. Armies have almost always acted as microcosms of manliness, and the pressures of the masculine role have sharpened as they have been militarised.<sup>32</sup> The need to exhibit manliness was, accordingly, intensified in the Irish Volunteers and IRA. Martial masculinity was the most exaggerated of masculinities, and the combatants who most clearly performed its idealised traits were deemed the truest of Irishmen. In other words, simply becoming a Volunteer was not enough to achieve the hallowed status of a 'true Irishman' and instead, recruits had to display a set of celebrated characteristics. These characteristics, and the beliefs and pressures underpinning them, will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

### Courage

As representatives of the cause, all republican men faced the pressures of masculine performance, but it was the men of the Irish Volunteers and IRA who, unsurprisingly, faced the firmest stipulations and regulations of conduct. They were of course bound by formal military discipline, but they were also consistently reminded of their responsibility to the nation and of the high standards that they had to meet both on and off duty. A Sinn Féin TD or Dáil Court Judge could, in theory, do his bit for the cause without great sacrifice or intrusion into his daily life, but the soldier was expected to be

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prestige work both as stick and carrot. They offer the male individual symbolic rewards in the form of honour and status as a 'real man' in exchange for facing the hardships and dangers of soldiering, but they also threaten him with shaming and loss of identity, with a social denial of his manhood, in case he should refuse' (*Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscript, Military Service and Masculinity in Finland, 1917-39* (Surrey, 2014), p.23).

<sup>32</sup> D.H. J. Morgan, 'Theatres of War: Combat, the Military and Masculinities' in H. Brod and M. Kaufman, *Theorising Masculinities* (London, 1994), pp.165-182; G.L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1996), pp.109-110.

a paragon of manliness in every sense and at all times. As Peter Hart has argued, the IRA was a subculture that was ‘not just republican but also young, male and tough’.<sup>33</sup> To be a valued Volunteer, toughness was imperative and to be tough was synonymous with being manly and courageous.

Courage was formulated as the foundational trait of true republican martial masculinity. It was essential to the self-image of the IRA as a collective, and also to individual soldiers’ sense of themselves. Tom Barry, for instance, was in Hart’s words, ‘a hard man obsessed with his own hardness’.<sup>34</sup> Courage was, moreover, presented as a trait naturally occurring within Irishmen across the nation’s history. *An tÓglách* proclaimed in 1921 that ‘in courage and steadfastness Irish soldiers have never been wanting’.<sup>35</sup> This related to the idea, propounded by constitutional nationalists and republicans alike, that the Irish had a natural flair for militarism. John Redmond claimed in 1916 that the Irish had been ‘endowed in a distinguished degree with a genuine military spirit, a natural genius and gift for war which produces born soldiers and commanders’.<sup>36</sup> An early 1914 edition of the *Irish Volunteer* had, meanwhile, asserted that it was ‘the easiest thing in the world to make the average Irishman into a soldier’, whilst a later edition advocated the development of ‘the patriotic and martial spirit that is natural in every Irish boy’.<sup>37</sup> Though it was presented in a different way and within a different context, this belief tallied with British stereotypes that had characterised the Irish as a ‘martial race’ with an ‘instinctive bellicosity’ suitable as daring army recruits but unfit for self-government.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> P. Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), p.14.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p.32.

<sup>35</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.22 (1 February 1921), p.2.

<sup>36</sup> J. Redmond, ‘Introduction: Ireland’s Part in the War’ in M. MacDonagh, *The Irish at the Front* (London, 1916), p.3.

<sup>37</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.I. no.2 (14 February 1914), p.6; *The Irish Volunteer* vol.I. no.35 (3 October 1914), p.16.

<sup>38</sup> J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-face killing in twentieth-century warfare* (London, 1999), p.106, 107, 113; This was part of a process described by Declan Kiberd whereby ‘under the guise

The republican writer Eimar O'Duffy was, according to Frances Flanagan, not unusual in his belief that the Irish had 'an inherently martial temperament'.<sup>39</sup> His namesake Eoin O'Duffy similarly claimed that 'the Gael is not by nature a coward or a Poltroon'.<sup>40</sup> By establishing militarism and courage as intrinsic traits of the Irishman, commentators could affirm that any Irish army would be an indisputably manly force. This had value in projecting an image of their masculine stature and military prowess to outsiders, but also in instilling a sense amongst soldiers that they were Irish and therefore *must* be courageous and militarily adept.<sup>41</sup>

Courage was, more broadly, the primary underlying trait of military masculinity. It was a prerequisite, necessary for the fulfilment of all other soldierly attributes. It was not only an avenue for military success but also an integral element of IRA self-identity, performed both to outsiders and to each other. Courage signified a man's altruism, total commitment to the cause, and readiness to do whatever it took to achieve the nation's independence. To be courageous and to be manly have often been deemed one and the same and in wartime in particular, courage has been the essential marker of a man's gendered role. This is not to say that women could not be celebrated for their own acts of courage and bravery in the revolutionary period, rather that they were seen to be displaying a trait that was coded as masculine. When urging women to 'shake out of their old grooves' and take a more active role in republicanism, Constance Markievicz

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of freedom, a racist slur might be sanitised and worn with pride by its very victims' (*Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London, 1995), pp.30-32).

<sup>39</sup> F. Flanagan, 'Stories of the Irish Revolution' in Borgonovo et al, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, p.54.

<sup>40</sup> E. O'Duffy (1922) quoted in F. McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford, 2005), p.124; O'Duffy's words came in a General Order issued in his role as leader of the newly formed police force of the Irish Free State, Garda Síochána.

<sup>41</sup> Terence MacSwiney, a vocal proponent of Irish militarism, had apparently advocated that 'every Irishman should regard himself as a soldier, and perfect himself, awaiting the opportunity' (P.S. O'Hegarty, *A Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney* (New York, 1922), p.18).

suggested 'bringing out, as it were, the masculine side of women's souls'.<sup>42</sup> Certain characteristics may have been considered masculine in nature, but this did not preclude women from displaying them. Whilst courage was aligned with manhood, and military manhood in particular, it was not exclusive to men or to soldiers. For instance, republican writer James Stephens wrote in 1917 that feminist and republican Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington had 'the courage of many lions' and described her pacifist husband Francis, who was executed during the Easter Rising, as 'the most absurdly courageous man I have ever met with or heard of' and 'a brave man with a clean soul'.<sup>43</sup>

Stories of individual courage were frequently reported in the pages of *An tÓglách* to be celebrated and emulated. In November 1918, it shared a 'fine example' which demonstrated that 'volunteers with weapons in their hands should never surrender without a fight'.<sup>44</sup> A Mr. McNellis of Cork had been 'attacked in his bedroom by several policemen' but was only overpowered after a 'desperate struggle' in which he inflicted a 'dangerous wound' on one of the policemen and injured two others. He was praised for his 'excellent' record as a Volunteer and it was asserted that 'his gallant defence against enemy aggression will evoke the admiration of every decent Irishman'. McNellis was also praised as a 'brave and simple-minded soldier of Ireland'.<sup>45</sup> This story is a microcosm of the wider projected narrative of the Irish republican struggle: a decent, simple and gallant collection of courageous men holding their own against an unscrupulous oppressor that far outnumbered them. These sentiments were echoed by P. S. O'Hegarty in 1924 when he asserted that 'no more heroic nor more apparently hopeless struggle was ever waged

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<sup>42</sup> C. Markievicz, *Irish Citizen* (23 October 1915), quoted in M. Ward (ed), *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Cork, 1995), p.51; She also advocated the value of bringing out 'the feminine side of men's souls' in the same piece.

<sup>43</sup> J. Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1917), p.83, p.66, p.68.

<sup>44</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.6 (15 November 1918), p.4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*



than that which the Irish Volunteers waged in 1920 and 1921' when both their 'numbers' and their 'equipment' were limited.<sup>46</sup> Courage figured as a weapon of the materially powerless against the materially powerful and the Volunteers were deemed to have yielded it with vigour on account of their manliness.

Notions of courage and cowardice provided a framework through which the split over the Anglo-Irish Treaty was debated. Those opposed to it accused those in favour of lacking courage in the face of a resumption of hostilities. When expressing that he was 'unreservedly' in favour of the ratification of the Treaty during the Dáil debates, Eoin O'Duffy stated, 'I may be called a coward for making that statement but I do not mind whether I am or not so long as I have not been called coward for the last 2 or 3 years'.<sup>47</sup> By using his military record in the War of Independence as defence against those who considered his decision cowardly, O'Duffy affirmed that what really mattered in the assessment of an Irishman's reputation was his courage on the battlefield. Seán Hales, meanwhile, rebuked the accusers by asserting that it in fact took a 'man of iron will' to stand up for the Treaty in the face of those questioning his principles.<sup>48</sup>

By sticking with the oath they had made to the Irish republic, the men who opposed the Treaty saw themselves as the most honourable and gallant of Volunteers. Bravery became an even firmer component of IRA identity during the Civil War than it had been during the War of Independence, as the self-defined men of action maintained the fight for a republic against Free State forces. When plans were proposed for a new anti-Treaty version of *An tÓglách*, one of the four 'principal objects' was to 'inculcate virile republican

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<sup>46</sup> O'Hegarty, *Victory of Sinn Féin*, p.40; The republican struggle had similarly been depicted as one of David and Goliath proportions: the souvenir booklet for Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in 1915 had, for example, asserted that 'David must not be intimidated by the bulk of Goliath's body' (NLI MS 13,174/12/1, Souvenir Booklet for Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's funeral (1 August 1915), p.13).

<sup>47</sup> E. O'Duffy, Dáil Éireann Debate (17 December 1921).

<sup>48</sup> S. Hales, Dáil Éireann Debate (17 December 1921).

principles'.<sup>49</sup> Virility was a byword for manliness and indicated courageousness: its inclusion as a tenet of anti-Treaty republicanism is indicative of the IRA's Civil War self-identity. The guerrillas presented themselves as the men who had not given up, and who had stayed true to the authentic principles of Irish republican manhood. The first issue of the anti-Treaty *Poblacht na hÉireann* in January 1922 carried the following message from Cathal Brugha:

And now after the centuries of suffering borne by the nation's manhood does anyone imagine that they will bend the knee to England at last? Does anyone suppose that now when they are strong they are going to do what they scorned doing when they were weak? If anybody does think that, then he does not know the men of Ireland.<sup>50</sup>

For Brugha and his comrades, an individual's support for or opposition to the Treaty was a matter of integrity and also a matter of courage and commitment in the face of a potential renewal of armed conflict with Britain.

Regardless of the side they had taken in the Civil War, courage is the characteristic most commonly cited by former IRA members when praising a comrade in their retrospective accounts. The frequency with which it is invoked to describe fellow Volunteers is both an indication of its value and of its centrality to IRA self-image. Retrospective statements by revolutionary actors were part of a process of memory and myth-making, and continual references to the IRA's courage helped to solidify the typical republican narrative in which all Volunteers were heroic freedom fighters. In his witness statement, Dan Breen quoted an unnamed man's particularly histrionic description of Dinny Lacy:

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<sup>49</sup> UCDA P69/77 (75), Memorandum from Con Moloney to Ernie O'Malley (25 August 1922).

<sup>50</sup> NLI MS 8455/21, *Poblacht na hÉireann* vol.I. no.1 (3 January 1922).

For seven centuries and more the sword of freedom has been wielded by many a noble soldier in this country, both prince and peasant, but none nobler than Dinny. No lion in Africa was braver than he, no monk in Melleray holier, no man in Ireland more maligned...Dinny, Dinny! My heart is sore, thinking of you tonight. You are still the beloved chieftain of what remains of the brigade – the brigade that was the pride of your life came from.<sup>51</sup>

Most were not so sensational but many presented courage as multidimensional, encapsulating bodily acts of bravery and endurance as well as a steadfast iron will. Liam Deasy referred to Seán Hogan as ‘not only a man of physical bravery but also of strong moral courage’ whilst Tom Barry wrote that Charlie Hurley had ‘the highest and most noble combination of courage; moral courage and courage in defeat and courage in attack’.<sup>52</sup> ‘Moral courage’ may have been essential to the manly ideal, but it was ‘physical bravery’ that was the most discernible to one’s peers. High-risk displays of courage had, however, the potential to look like bravado. As such, they were only considered worthy if they were deemed authentic in nature and selfless in intent and therefore in keeping with the movement’s self-image as an honest and righteous force. Volunteers were expected to practice humility alongside their bravery and the first issue of *An tÓglách* in August 1918 affirmed that recruits were ‘not out for show but for solid work’ and did not ‘study heroic attitudes, but when any risk is to be faced they [did] not flinch’.<sup>53</sup> Two years later, it praised the ‘silent heroism’ of the Volunteers.<sup>54</sup> A 1917 Sinn Féin pamphlet similarly claimed that ‘self-sacrificing patriotism would forbid a man ever to be vain or to seek his

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<sup>51</sup> BMH WS 1763, Dan Breen, p.156.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Appendix B - Tribute written to Charlie Hurley written by Tom Barry in 1935’ in T. Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Cork, 1949), p.37.

<sup>53</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.1 (15 August 1918), p.1; Volunteer Seamus Babington deemed the humility and modesty of his IRA comrades in Tipperary to be more significant than their courage. He wrote of their ‘loyalty, good humour, cheerfulness, bravery, honesty and, most strikingly of all, modesty and humility’ (WS 1595, p.171).

<sup>54</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.13 (15 June 1920), p.4.

own praise or glory'.<sup>55</sup> The sincerity of individual republican men's courage was also regularly emphasised by their comrades. Kevin Barry, for instance, was described as facing death 'with courage but with nothing of the braggart'.<sup>56</sup> Michael Collins was similarly depicted by his contemporary Eoin MacNeill as 'the bravest of the brave' who 'never posed in the smallest degree as a hero' or 'struck the self-flattering attitude of an idealist'.<sup>57</sup> Patrick McHugh, meanwhile, described the 'sincerity and simplicity' of Seán Milroy: 'No bravado, no heroics – just a duty to be performed'.<sup>58</sup> Each of these examples were written after the man in question had died, and worked to affirm their credibility as genuine, selfless heroes.

### Youthful vigour and military methods

In the discourses of the IRA, the conception of courage intersected thoroughly with the idea of youth. Youthfulness and young men became idealised as representations of freshness, enthusiasm and capability. Youth meant vigour, and that was precisely what the movement needed for its success. Members of the militant republican community were, in literal terms, young. From 1916 to 1919, the average age of a rank-and-file Volunteer was 23, and the average officer was 25.<sup>59</sup> Thereafter, the average age rose by around one year.<sup>60</sup> Kevin Barry, the first man to be sentenced to death during the War of Independence, was executed at the age of 18. Todd Andrews, who was 15 when he joined the Volunteers in 1916, saw anyone over 30 as 'an old man'.<sup>61</sup> The youthful appearance

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<sup>55</sup> *The Ethics of Sinn Féin* no.6 (Dublin, 1917), p.6 [available at: <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland//images/uploads/further-reading/Ed120-EthicsOfSinnFein-NLI.pdf>].

<sup>56</sup> S. Cronin *The Story of Kevin Barry* (Cork, 1965).

<sup>57</sup> NLI MS 44,102/3, E. MacNeill, 'How We Can Make Him Live', *The Free State* no.28, vol.1 (29 August 1922).

<sup>58</sup> BMH WS 677, Patrick McHugh, p.7.

<sup>59</sup> Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.178.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> C.S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1979), p.180; In his second memoir, Andrews noted how immature he had been during his revolutionary experience: 'My boyhood and early manhood,

of the Volunteer on the right of Figure One indicates how young some of the 1916 rebels were.



Figure 1: NLI NPA GPO2, Rebels inside the GPO during the Easter Rising (1916).

Aside from the actual ages of recruits, youthfulness was integral to the IRA's sense of themselves. As Gavin Foster has argued, the youthful identity of the republican movement was 'reinforced by its rhetorical idealisation of the patriotism, political purity and moral virtue of "young Ireland"'.<sup>62</sup> This rhetoric saw its clearest realisations in representation of young, strong and zealous Volunteers fighting for their own future. In the first ever issue of *The Irish Volunteer* published in February 1914, Patrick Pearse wrote a piece declaring that by establishing a new nationalist military organisation,

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spent as they were in all-male schools, football clubs and the IRA, had left me emotionally immature in the matter of inter-sex relations to an extent which would be incredible today but which was at that time the not uncommon experience of a man of nearly twenty-three years of age, as I was when I came home from the Civil War' (C.S. Andrews, *Man of No Property: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1982), p.25).

<sup>62</sup> G. Foster, 'From "the glorious innocence and intuition of youth" to "young blackguards" and "hooligans": the death of Irish revolutionary youth culture' in J. Countryman and K. Matthews (eds.), *The Country of the Young: Interpretations of Youth and Childhood in Irish culture* (Dublin, 2013), pp.51-2.

Ireland has 'renewed its youth'.<sup>63</sup> He did, however, embed his ideal of youthfulness in firmly historical terms, pronouncing that the Volunteers were 'young today as men were young when to be a young man was to be a hero' whilst evoking the memory of various Irish heroes from the mythical Cúchulainn through to the nineteenth century Fenians.<sup>64</sup> The contention that the Volunteers represented youthful vigour persisted beyond Pearse and the Easter Rising. A 1919 issue of *An tÓglách* proclaimed, 'It is a new Ireland we are fighting for today, not an aged, tired, cynical Ireland but a young, full-blooded, vigorous Éire, full of hope, courage and enthusiasm'.<sup>65</sup> The men, sometimes boys, who joined their ranks were presented as saviours, who would, through their sacrifice, drag Ireland from the doldrums into its bright and prosperous destiny as an independent nation. As part of this rhetoric, P.S. O'Hegarty deemed it 'fitting' that the majority of Volunteers were young. Although 'there were many middle-aged men, and some old men, who joined the ranks of the Volunteers, who did their drill and their route march with pride and joy', it was the young men 'to whom the Volunteer movement was the movement for which all Ireland had been waiting, the movement for which her best minds had been unconsciously preparing'.<sup>66</sup> O'Hegarty's words, and his distinction between the value of the young men and the older men despite their unanimous commitment to republican ideals, are indicative of a wider intergenerational tension that had emerged in the years preceding the Easter Rising. The disdain for the IPP mentioned earlier rested in large part on their image as an 'ossified, cynical, corrupt and anachronistic' establishment who were 'servile and slavish' and had 'sapped the essential manhood' from those who followed them.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.I. no.1 (7 February 1914), p.7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.9 (15 January 1919), p.2.

<sup>66</sup> O'Hegarty, *Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney*, p.40.

<sup>67</sup> Foster, 'glorious innocence', pp.51-2; Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.180; O'Hegarty, *Short Memoir*, p.3; The average age of an IPP member by 1918 was 55 (Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.107).

During the 1918 general election, which saw the defeat of constitutional nationalism in a dramatic landslide, Sinn Féin propaganda depicted the IPP as 'old and worn out' whilst calling on voters to 'put in new men to do Ireland's work'.<sup>68</sup> Age and constitutional methods became symbols of inadequacy and weakness, whilst the young militants were taken to represent potency and power.<sup>69</sup>

Those older men who had advocated physical force republicanism were not immune to criticism either. The fathers of the young revolutionaries, including those who supported Sinn Féin and were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, were seen as the generation who had not mounted a rebellion against British rule in Ireland, and who had therefore overseen a feminising and weakening of the nation which was only remedied with the creation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913.<sup>70</sup> P.S. O'Hegarty claimed that when the organisation 'burst out of the ground', it was a result of young Irishmen's 'determination to prove their manhood'.<sup>71</sup> A January 1919 issue of *An tÓglách* set out the transformation engendered by the Volunteers in dramatic terms:

It would be hard to find a period of Irish history in which the Irish National spirit seemed to have sunk to a lower ebb than in that year of 1913. The previous eight years had been years of Anglicisation, corruption, and the insidious lowering of National ideals probably unexampled in our annals. All the dominant forces in Irish

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<sup>68</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.163.

<sup>69</sup> According to Kevin O'Shiel (BMH WS 1770), some Volunteer gunmen had such 'utter distaste' for 'constitutionalism in any shape or form' that they 'would not countenance its use even as an auxiliary to physical force policy' (p.609).

<sup>70</sup> R. Mytton, 'Chapter One: Resurrecting Irish Manliness', *Nationalist Masculinities and the Irish Volunteers 1913-1916* (University of Sheffield MA dissertation, 2016), pp.12-23; There were, of course, individual men of the older generation, such as Proclamation signatory Tom Clarke, who were held in high esteem by the younger generation and who supported and aided the revolutionary struggle. The disdain was levelled more at the generation as a collective; Patrick Pease had written in 1915, 'There has been nothing more terrible in Irish history than the failure of the last generation' ('Ghosts', in P. Pearse, *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork, 2012), p.177).

<sup>71</sup> O'Hegarty, *Short Memoir*, p.38; The conception of Volunteering as 'youthful, energetic, romantic' had parallels across the European long nineteenth-century as a 'model of political engagement that owed much to the fraternal ideal of the French Revolution' (See L. Riall, 'Martyr Cults in Nineteenth-Century Italy' *The Journal of Modern History* 82.2 (2010), p.277).

public life stood for cowardice, compromise, and corruption. All faith in lofty ideals, in patriotism, of self-sacrifice seemed to have vanished. A horrible cynicism reigned everywhere...Suddenly the Volunteers sprang into being, and the first signs appeared of a change of atmosphere. All that was healthy, all that was sincere and courageous in Ireland rallied to the standard of the Irish Volunteers. For, despite everything, the heart of Ireland was sound, and burned secretly for independence.<sup>72</sup>

Through militarisation, the manly national spirit was deemed to have been revived: the Volunteers had overseen not the emergence but the resurrection of warrior values and courage in Irishmen. Their success was perceived to have been achieved not with the help of, but in spite of the previous generation and their failings. Seamus Robinson recalled that his brother pointed out to him that 'we should be ashamed of our father's generation' for 'they were the first generation of Irishmen who had not struck a blow of Ireland'.<sup>73</sup> Diarmaid Ferriter has posited this 'gulf between the generations' as a 'crucial part of growing militancy' whilst Roy Foster argued that 'the previous generation was often the perceived enemy every bit as much as the British government'.<sup>74</sup> Denis McCullough in fact ejected his own father from his IRB cell, for he was amongst the 'older men' considered to be 'of no further use'.<sup>75</sup>

This sense of separation between the younger and the older men of the nationalist movement was loaded with a host of suppositions about the nature of manliness in each generation, in terms of both their physical strength and energy and their fervour, commitment and determination. An edition of Terence MacSwiney's self-financed and short-lived 1914 *Fianna Fáil* journal contrasted the 'battle-weary' older generation with

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<sup>72</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.9 (15 January 1919), p.1.

<sup>73</sup> S. Robinson quoted in J. Augusteijn, 'Motivation: Why did they Fight for Ireland? The Motivation of Volunteers in the Revolution' in J. Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.110.

<sup>74</sup> Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.107; R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London, 2015), p.xxi.

<sup>75</sup> Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.118.



the young men of the Irish Volunteers who were ‘young, full of fire and vitality’ and could therefore be ‘relied on’.<sup>76</sup> They wanted to fight and craved ‘to be called to sacrifice and trials of endurance for Ireland, to enter the last and victorious battle for Irish liberty’ no matter the personal cost.<sup>77</sup> A year later MacSwiney wrote in *The Irish Volunteer* journal that the present time was a ‘trial of our youth and fresh manhood’ and argued that ‘old men [would] not suffice’ when it came to the necessary sacrifices that the cause required: ‘it is to the young we must look, because they have life before them, full of promise, tempting to ambition...’.<sup>78</sup> The Volunteers were conceived of as a panacea that would revivify the spirit of the nation and the masculinity of its men, ultimately ridding the country of British evil and creating a prosperous, righteous and independent nation. With their imperturbable courage and vigour, they would more than make up for what was perceived as the feebleness of the previous generation and of constitutional nationalism.

In doing so, the IRA presented itself as a force of anti-political men of action who valued fighting over talking and the gun over the pen.<sup>79</sup> Despite the electoral success of Sinn Féin and its own self-conception as a ‘manly and straightforward’ force, Volunteers frequently professed an aversion to all things political.<sup>80</sup> Peter Hart has argued that an ‘adamantly anti-political stance was a core part of the guerrilla’s sense of identity’.<sup>81</sup> Those engaged in politics as well as militarism could, often rather paradoxically, express similar sentiments. For instance, when Seán Moylan stated, ‘I am not a politician; I am a

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<sup>76</sup> *Fianna Fáil* (September-December 1914) quoted in O’Hegarty, *Short Memoir*, p.56.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*; The fact that this passage which asserts a craving for sacrifice and endurance was very likely written by MacSwiney himself is telling, as he later lamented the fact that he had not taken part in the Easter Rising and 4 years later died in a famous 74-day hunger strike.

<sup>78</sup> T. MacSwiney in *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II. no.34 (31 July 1915), p.4.

<sup>79</sup> The gun was also, for many, more beguiling than the pen. Fearghal McGarry has noted that for those who decided to join the Irish Volunteers in 1913 and 1914, politics was often a ‘less important consideration than the thrill of wearing a uniform, drilling, or firing a gun’ (*The Rising* (Oxford, 2010), p.64).

<sup>80</sup> Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.180.

<sup>81</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.238.

soldier', he was 'perfectly sincere, even though he was a sitting TD, a member of his constituency Sinn Féin Executive, and a Dáil Court judge'.<sup>82</sup> Even if an IRA member like Moylan engaged in politics, his professed identity and spirit remained anti-political because politics was deemed to represent the British, the IPP and all things unmanly and corrupt. Indeed, Todd Andrews argued that amongst Volunteers and Sinn Féin members alike, 'all politicians were regarded as low, dirty and treacherous'.<sup>83</sup> As such, *An tÓglách* stated clearly that 'Volunteers are not politicians...they follow no political leader as such; their allegiance is to the Irish nation'.<sup>84</sup> Their sole aim and purpose was presented as a thoroughly simple one: to get the British out of Ireland. For those who adhered to these precepts most unequivocally, republicanism was a black and white issue with no room for nuance. This absolutist conception of the struggle manifested in the split over the Anglo-Irish Treaty as the majority of active IRA guerrilla fighters opposed the settlement.<sup>85</sup> An uncompromising outlook was part of their self-conception as armed men who would not stop fighting until they achieved their singular goal of total Irish independence: Volunteer turned writer Seán Ó Faoláin characterised the mentality of the IRA as, 'fight first, think afterwards. Get rid of the British, and all the rest would follow naturally'.<sup>86</sup> Dáil Eireann's Minister of Defence during the War of Independence, Cathal Brugha, similarly stated that military men 'think of nothing but their own particular end, and cannot be brought to consider the political consequences of their pro-proceedings'.<sup>87</sup> The details of politics and ideology, of what an independent Ireland would look like and how it should be governed, were considered to be beyond their remit as a straightforward

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.101.

<sup>84</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.15 (15 August 1918), p.1.

<sup>85</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.268; T. Garvin, *1922: The Birth of Irish Democracy* (Dublin, 1996), p.34.

<sup>86</sup> S. Ó Faoláin, *Vive Moi!* (Dublin, 1965), p.144.

<sup>87</sup> C. Brugha quoted in O'Hegarty, *Victory of Sinn Féin*, p.47.

and honest collective of national soldiers: they did not write or speak about their aims but fought, and were willing to die, for them. Despite his status as an experienced orator and wordsmith, Patrick Pearse had found ‘an Ireland of talkers’ to be ‘disgusting’ and advocated instead a nation of ‘the strong man armed’.<sup>88</sup> His fellow Easter Rising leaders, Thomas MacDonagh and Éamonn Ceannt, had similarly proclaimed that ‘a man who is a mere author is nothing’ and ‘a clerk, a man who writes, is quiet and honest but he is not a man’ and this rhetoric stuck, even amongst those who, like the authors of these quotes at the time of writing, were themselves prominent talkers and writers.<sup>89</sup>

Volunteer masculinity was, therefore, dependent on armament. To be armed was to be powerful, and guns were a prerequisite to achieving true martial manliness. Weapons had long been celebrated and sought after by Irish republicans as a symbol and facilitator of masculine and nationalistic power. In 1910, IRB member Bulmer Hobson’s *Irish Freedom* newspaper wrote that ‘arms turned [the United Irishmen of 1798] into men, and made them realise they were Irishmen’.<sup>90</sup> The Irish Volunteers were first equipped with guns after the Howth gun-running in the summer of 1914, and during the War of Independence guns were continually sought and acquired through various means including seizure from Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks, ex-soldiers and civilians. They were, of course, essential on a practical level to fight the British but they also had great symbolic value. Joseph Plunkett stated explicitly in the first issue of *The Irish Volunteer* in 1914 that ‘it is at once the duty and the dignity of Christian manhood to bear arms, even if only for their symbolism, and if there were to be no likelihood of the necessity of their use’ because ‘a man is not fully a man until he holds the power of life

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<sup>88</sup> D. Ryan, *The Man Called Pearse* (Dublin, 1919), p.17.

<sup>89</sup> T. MacDonagh quoted in Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.233; E. Ceannt quoted in ‘Easter Rising – Ar-a-mach na Cáisge’, Episode 3 [television documentary], *BBC Alba* (10 April 2016); MacDonagh was a poet and playwright whilst Ceannt had done clerical work.

<sup>90</sup> Benton, ‘Women Disarmed’, p.152.

and death'.<sup>91</sup> It would not be long before guns did become more than a symbol, but still they were fetishised as, in Charles Townshend's words, 'the pre-eminent symbol of military credibility, and indeed of national manhood'.<sup>92</sup> The gun was the facilitator of Irish manliness, and a willingness and readiness to shoot was essential to meeting its ideals.<sup>93</sup> A 1918 issue of *An tÓglách* stated that 'the appeal of the Irish Volunteers was responded to by all that was manly in Ireland' but if they were to win, it was essential that the country had 'armed men; trained men, ready to act with courage and determination when *the time comes*'.<sup>94</sup> Another told readers, 'don't argue, but shoot!'.<sup>95</sup> The contempt for politics and the valorisation of the gun was only heightened amongst the men of the anti-Treaty IRA during the Civil War who 'identified totally with the armed revolution' and retained a sense of 'militant elitism'.<sup>96</sup> Their identity as 'plain fighting men' was sustained through their use of guns in defiance of the Free State.<sup>97</sup> In 1922, an 'exhortation to preserve morale' in the anti-Treaty IRA asserted that 'the fighting men of Ireland are her sole and ultimate hope. Not by kind words is a tyrant driven out, but by strenuous blows'.<sup>98</sup>

The Volunteers, from their inception through to their incarnation as the anti-Treaty IRA and beyond, therefore defined themselves by their means almost as much as their ends. For some, the sanctity of military methods mattered just as much as the realisation of an Irish republic. Sinn Féin politician Liam de Roiste had observed as early as 1906 that for some advanced nationalists, physical force was a 'creed and object in itself' and independence achieved by peaceful means would be 'invalid'.<sup>99</sup> Such thinking

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<sup>91</sup> J. Plunkett, 'Civilised Nationhood', *Irish Volunteer* vol.I. no.1 (7 February 1914), p.4;

<sup>92</sup> C. Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2013), p.40.

<sup>93</sup> For more on the gun worship of the Irish Volunteers and its intersection with masculinity, see 'Chapter Two: The Cult of Guns' in R. Mytton, *Nationalist Masculinities*, pp.24-37.

<sup>94</sup> *An tÓglách*, vol.I. no.7. (30 November 1918), p.3.

<sup>95</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.2 (14 September 1918), p.1.

<sup>96</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.268.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> NLI MS 31,251, "Dangers": exhortation to preserve morale in the army' (May 1922).

<sup>99</sup> L. de Roiste quoted in Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.181.

only proliferated as Europe descended into war. Patrick Pearse asserted in 1915 that national freedom was not 'a status to be conceded' but a 'glory to be achieved', and bloodshed and sacrifice were the means to achieve it.<sup>100</sup> Though he was not a Volunteer, the nationalist writer James Stephens succinctly articulated in 1917 the belief that the methods of the Easter Rising mattered more than the independence they were employed to achieve:

I speak as an Irishman, and am momentarily leaving out of account every other consideration. If, after all her striving, freedom had come to her as a gift, as a peaceful present such as is sometimes given away with a pound of tea, Ireland would have accepted the gift with shamefacedness, and have felt that her centuries of revolt had ended in something very like ridicule...We might have crept into liberty like some kind of domesticated man, whereas now we may be allowed to march into freedom with the honours of war.<sup>101</sup>

It was a culture of masculinity that produced such an analysis. It was by no means a view shared by all but for some republicans, the way that men fought, toiled and sacrificed themselves for independence could be just as important as independence itself. They were proving themselves as courageous, credible and manly soldiers. As the next chapter will illustrate, however, the vision of Volunteer manliness did extend beyond such ideals of virility and bellicosity.

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<sup>100</sup> Pearse, 'Ghosts' in *The Coming Revolution*, p.178; He had similarly proclaimed in 1914, 'I do not know how nationhood is achieved except by armed men' (Speech at Robert Emmet Commemoration in New York (2 March 1914) in *The Coming Revolution*, p.65).

<sup>101</sup> Stephens, *The Insurrection*, p.xii-xiii.

### Discipline, respectability and morality

It was stated repeatedly and firmly in *An tÓglách* that ‘mere courage’ was ‘of little avail by itself’.<sup>102</sup> For the IRA to be truly successful and truly legitimate, courage had to be combined with discipline, respectability, hard work, collegiality, intelligence and obedience. Discipline in particular was paramount, simply because it raised ‘a man above the level of those who have no discipline, just as law and order in a community raise its inhabitants above the level of a nation of savages’.<sup>103</sup> The journal regularly chastised battalions and individuals for being shirkers, slackers, selfish, arrogant, dilatory, easy-going or intemperate. It simultaneously encouraged every Volunteer to comply with a firm discipline including but not limited to ‘punctual attendance on parades, ready obedience to orders, careful study of his duties, proper care of his rifle and ammunition, and keeping himself in preparedness for a prompt answer to mobilisation orders’.<sup>104</sup> Not only should a Volunteer practise good discipline, he should do so merrily, displaying ‘prompt and cheerful obedience to orders, and zeal, skill and courage in carrying them out’.<sup>105</sup> The regularity with which such exhortations were made may indicate ill-discipline within their ranks, or simply how important soldierly discipline and comportment were deemed to be. Either way, the traits disparaged and exhorted in *An tÓglách* provide an insight into what IRA leaders imagined their perfect Volunteer to be.

As noted earlier, courage was believed to have both a physical and a moral component. When a man possessed the former but not the latter, and had no sense of discipline and respectability, he became a problem. In his witness statement, Volunteer Joe Good expressed his concern during the revolutionary period about the ‘young men

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<sup>102</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.13 (15 June 1920), p.1.

<sup>103</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no.28 (30 September 1921), p.3.

<sup>104</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.3 (30 September 1918), p.2.

<sup>105</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.12 (1 June 1920), p.1.

brought up to a pitch of enthusiasm to attack an enemy, but lacking everything except courage'.<sup>106</sup> P.S. O'Hegarty, meanwhile, claimed that Ireland had always been abundant in physical courage but had suffered from a lack of moral courage.<sup>107</sup> As a result, the country had been 'damned by successive layers of irresponsible gunman' since 1916.<sup>108</sup> O'Hegarty's words were meant as an attack on the anti-Treaty IRA, but they point to the wider understanding, expressed in *An tÓglách* and by individual Volunteers, that physical courage on its own could lead to recklessness and brutality. 'Discretion' was paramount, and 'pluck' was not to be confused with 'rashness or foolhardiness'.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, recruits had to be kept in check by a strict sense of discipline and morality. These values were particularly important during the War of Independence, when the IRA sought to establish its credibility and legitimacy as a national army. In the pages of *An tÓglách*, the righteous and chivalrous conduct of the IRA was contrasted with the barbarity, drunkenness and immorality of the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. In 1920, enemy forces were described as 'bands of armed bandittis and drunken hooligans' who raged in 'blind fury' and engaged in 'cowardly meanness', 'savage barbarity' and 'treachery' whilst the IRA observed 'the rules of civilised warfare' and remained cool-headed and disciplined.<sup>110</sup> When the War of Independence had finished, Austin Stack proclaimed that through their

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<sup>106</sup> BMH WS 388, Joe Good, p.35.

<sup>107</sup> O'Hegarty, *Victory of Sinn Féin*, p.170.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.3 (30 September 1918), p.2.

<sup>110</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.16 (7 August 1920), p.1; *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.20 (1 October 1920), p.1; There is no disputing that the Black and Tans committed diabolical acts during their time in Ireland, but David Leeson's work has shown that republican depictions of the forces as criminals from English prisons or brutalised ex-soldiers seeking an avenue for their violent tendencies is inaccurate. Rather, there was nothing in the average Black and Tan's background 'that would explain his conduct in Ireland' (*The Black and Tans: British Police and Auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920-21* (Oxford, 2012), p.68-9).

conduct in the conflict, Irishmen had established their moral, as well as their physical and intellectual, superiority over the British.<sup>111</sup>

Since the IRA sought to cultivate an appearance of superior respectability as well as of disciplined military proficiency, stipulations about the conduct of Volunteers extended beyond their comportment on active duty to their behaviour in everyday life. There was, in the words of Julia Eichenberg, 'no leave from guerrilla warfare'.<sup>112</sup> Though it was aimed at party members rather than Volunteers specifically, a 1917 pamphlet published by Sinn Féin illustrated the extent to which republicans were urged to dedicate everything to the cause:

Independence is first and foremost a personal matter. The Sinn Féiner's moral obligations are many and restrictive. His conduct must be above reproach, his personality stainless. He must learn the Irish language, write on Irish paper, abstain from alcohol and tobacco...make examples of your life, your virtues, your courage, temperance, your manliness, which will attract your fellow countrymen to the national cause.<sup>113</sup>

Another issue asserted that the 'the success of the Sinn Féin policy...depends upon the determination of Irish men and women to become, as far as it lies in their power, a comely and heroic and self-sacrificing and loveable race'.<sup>114</sup> For Volunteers, to be heroic and self-sacrificing was to dedicate everything to the cause. P.S O'Hegarty presented Terence

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<sup>111</sup> NLI MS 17,088, Speech by Austin Stack in Providence, USA (20 March 1922); This was, of course, thoroughly propagandistic and the IRA in fact engaged in various actions that were far from morally sound. See p.74 for more detail.

<sup>112</sup> J. Eichenberg, 'The Dark Side of Independence: Paramilitary Violence in Ireland and Poland after the First World War', *Contemporary European History* 19.3 (2010), p.237.

<sup>113</sup> Riobard Ua Floinn, *The Ethics of Sinn Féin* (Limerick, n.d.) quoted in F. McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford, 2005), p.121; As the quote attests, idealised Irish manhood was also equated with 'cultural loyalty' expressed through speaking the Irish language and buying Irish products (see S. McKibben, 'The Poor Mouth: A Parody of (Post)Colonial Irish Manhood', *Research in African Literature* 34.3 (2003), pp.96-114).

<sup>114</sup> *The Ethics of Sinn Féin* no.6 (Dublin, 1917), p.5 [available at: <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland//images/uploads/further-reading/Ed120-EthicsOfSinnFein-NLI.pdf>].



MacSwiney as a prototype of the Volunteer who ‘threw himself into it with his whole soul and his whole strength’: ‘A weekly drill was not an end of his duty, for he spent the rest of the week in studying military science, in fitting himself to do his duty as a Volunteer’.<sup>115</sup> *An tÓglách* had indeed made clear that being a good Volunteer required more than exemplary conduct during active service:

On all occasions, whether acting individually or in unison, whether in war work or peaceful tasks, each man should realise the responsibility of belonging to an Army of Ireland, an army of stainless record and unblemished honour. He must do nothing that can reflect dishonour on the corps to which he belongs.<sup>116</sup>

In order to maintain the IRA’s honour, Volunteers were encouraged to cultivate a righteous moral character through the practice of ‘self-control’ in their personal lives.<sup>117</sup> Laziness, selfishness and a violent temper were amongst the vices listed in *An tÓglách* as tendencies that a Volunteer could overcome with self-control.<sup>118</sup> Once accomplished, he was more likely to be a ‘valuable asset to the army, as the effect of personal discipline extends beyond the individual’.<sup>119</sup> It was alcohol, however, that was deemed the most destructive, as well as seemingly the most prolific, vice to plague soldierly discipline.<sup>120</sup> It was proclaimed that ‘a drunken Volunteer is worse than a useless Volunteer’ and since ‘the strength of the chain is that of its weakest link’, ‘any individual Volunteers who are prone to the vice of drunkenness are not merely injuring themselves but injuring the Army to which they belong and the Nation which they claim to serve’.<sup>121</sup> Drunkenness

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<sup>115</sup> O’Hegarty, *Short Memoir*, p.42.

<sup>116</sup> *An tÓglách*, vol.I. no.1. (15 August 1918), p.1.

<sup>117</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no.28 (30 September 1921), p.3.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> According to Joost Augusteijn, ‘drinking became a habit, and indeed a serious problem, for many active Volunteers’ (*From Public Defiance*, p.142).

<sup>121</sup> Alcohol became an issue for the IRA leadership during the Truce of 1921 as discipline lagged and Volunteers indulged in the glory of their perceived victory (See Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, pp.87-101).

could, first and foremost, detract from military effectiveness. Todd Andrews noted that the failures of the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion were ‘commonly believed to have been due to drunkenness’ and this may have contributed to the aversion to alcohol amongst committed Volunteers.<sup>122</sup> Equally important though was the fact that intoxicated Volunteers, even when off duty and out of uniform, would detract from the image the IRA had constructed of itself as a body of disciplined, honourable men. Andrews himself equated ‘alcoholic drink with national degradation’ and Ben Novick has illustrated how temperance amongst Irish nationalists was interlinked with propaganda that depicted the Irish as bastions of purity, decency, and morality and the degenerate English as ‘beer swilling cowards’.<sup>123</sup> By presenting their forces as disciplined, respectable and sober, the IRA sought to establish its legitimacy as a national army.

For those who most wholeheartedly committed themselves to the cause, moulding every aspect of their life to fit the republican ideal was no burden. Con Colbert’s life, cut short by execution after the Easter Rising, was, according to Éamon Dore, one of ‘suppression of self’ for he dedicated himself to the republican cause ‘as truly as if he were a hermit monk’.<sup>124</sup> Fearghal McGarry has noted that ‘the most committed Gaels’, for whom nationalism was a way of life, identified Ireland’s ‘history and culture’ with their own identity.<sup>125</sup> The values of republicanism, including those relating to morality,

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<sup>122</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.106; There was also a much longer history of temperance movements in Ireland, which had in some guises included the belief that ‘the eradication of intemperance would lead to the eradication of British rule and vice versa’ and touted the slogan ‘Ireland sober, Ireland free’ (D. Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity 1800-2000: The Transformation of Oral Space* (Cambridge, 2011), p.102-5).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p.283; B. Novick, ‘Propaganda I: Advanced Nationalist Propaganda and Moralistic Revolution, 1914-1918’ in Augusteijn, *The Irish Revolution*, p.40, 47; See also H. Dunbar, *Representations of gender in the Irish nationalist daily newspapers, c.1912-1923* (PhD thesis) (University of Southampton, 2016), p.70-72; There was, of course, significant variation in the extent to which individual republican men adhered to the ideal of temperance and morality. In the words of Ernie O’Malley, ‘[Richard] Mulcahy never said anything stronger than “bloody”; he did not smoke or drink. Cathal Brugha neither cursed, smoked nor drank. [Michael] Collins was an adept at all three’ (*On Another Man’s Wound* (Dublin, 1936), p. 113).

<sup>124</sup> NLI MS 49,487/10/3, Address of Éamon Dore when uncovering a plaque in tribute to Con Colbert [undated].

<sup>125</sup> McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy*, p.25.

respectability and discipline, became an intrinsic element of their psyche and this was actively encouraged by republican ideologues. A Sinn Féin pamphlet had indeed asserted that, 'Each of us is the Irish nation in miniature. Therefore we ought to make ourselves as like as possible to what we think the Irish nation to be'.<sup>126</sup> McGarry has shown that Eoin O'Duffy, from his service in the Volunteers through his role as police commissioner of the Garda Síochána to his leadership of the fascist Blueshirts in the 1930s, remained a vocal advocate of such values even though he often did not practise what he preached.<sup>127</sup> What he preached was 'a gospel of improvement which emphasised the importance of respectability, temperance, disciplined service, patriotism and virility: values which he summarised as manliness'.<sup>128</sup> McGarry has in fact contended that during the revolutionary period, these ideals informed Sinn Féin's ideology even 'more profoundly' than republicanism had done.<sup>129</sup> Charles Townshend has made a similar assertion that republicanism primarily constructed itself in 'moral rather than ideological terms', positing manliness as 'the most vital quality of true Irishmen' whilst the distinguishing mark of their enemies was 'degeneracy'.<sup>130</sup> If this is true of Sinn Féin then it is certainly true of the IRA, who were avowedly anti-political and whose self-image and values were more in tune with moral ideals of manliness than with any political ideology.

The republican movement presented itself as egalitarian and classless, claiming that it did 'not matter whether you [were] a duke or a tram conductor'.<sup>131</sup> The moral

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<sup>126</sup> *The Ethics of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1917), p.2.

<sup>127</sup> McGarry notes 'the inconsistencies between O'Duffy's prescriptive strictures on a wide range of issues and his actual behaviour' (*Eoin O'Duffy*, p.163). For example, despite his advocacy of temperance he had a 'serious alcohol problem' (p.162).

<sup>128</sup> McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p.121.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Townshend, *The Republic*, p.56.

<sup>131</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II. no.1 (5 December 1914), p.8; Individual Volunteers would also claim at the time and in retrospect that their movement was a classless one. Florrie O'Donoghue, for example, wrote of 'men drawn from every walk of life, from the Professor to the simple labourer, all united and contented in a noble service' (See Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.12).

ideals discussed above were, however, connected to contemporary middle class values and distaste for the pastimes associated with the urban working and upper classes.<sup>132</sup> In her work on the life of Richard Mulcahy, Maryann Valiulis argued that, despite their distaste for Anglicisation, Irish nationalists had ‘blended elements of middle-class Victorian thought’ into their collective respectable, puritanical and righteous self-portrait.<sup>133</sup> This was certainly true for the likes of O’Duffy and Mulcahy who were amongst the most conservative cadres of the republican movement who went on to dominate the Irish Free State, but it should be noted that many revolutionaries had been far from traditional and puritanical in their beliefs.<sup>134</sup> The manly values promoted in republican publications may have strongly resonated with contemporary middle class ideals but, especially in the earlier revolutionary years, there was a notable degree of variation in the extent to which individual republicans incorporated these ideals into their own beliefs. Whatever their personal convictions, however, all IRA members were

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<sup>132</sup> The republican youth group Na Fianna Éireann had, like other such organisations around the turn of the century, similarly been established in part to inculcate ‘middle class values of order and discipline’ (M. Hay, *Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-23: Scouting for Rebels* (Manchester, 2019), p.9); Though the official publications of, and indeed many of the leaders within, the republican infrastructure avoided class politics and questions relating to social and economic issues for fear they would cause division and distract from the independence struggle, there were many revolutionaries, particularly amongst those who took part in the Easter Rising, who melded their nationalism with progressive and socialist politics. For literature on the avoidance of class issues see M. Laffan, *The Resurrection of Sinn Féin* (Cambridge, 1999), p.252-8; M.G. Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the Founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992), p.35; McGarry, *The Rising*, pp.38-41; F. Lane & D. Ó Drisceoil (eds.), *Politics and the Irish Working Class, 1830-1945* (Basingstoke, 2005), p.2; For literature on class politics during the revolutionary period see G.M. Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class and Conflict* (Basingstoke, 2015); B. Hanley, ‘Class dismissed?’ *History Ireland* 21.4 (2013); C. Desmond Greaves, *Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution* (London, 1971); J. Connolly, *Socialism and Nationalism: a selection from the writings of James Connolly* (Dublin, 1948); J. Githens-Mazer, ‘Ancient Erin, Modern Socialism: Myths, Memories and Symbols of the Irish Nation in the writing of James Connolly’, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 10.1 (2008); L. Cahill, *Forgotten Revolution: Limerick Soviet 1919 – A Threat to British Power in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990); C. Kostick, *Revolution in Ireland: Popular Militancy 1917-1923* (Cork, 2009).

<sup>133</sup> Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, p.2.

<sup>134</sup> Roy Foster has explored the strands of social radicalism within the revolutionary generation that ‘were transmuted into more sober, and conservative, commitments after the fighting actually broke out’ (*Vivid Faces*, p.142); David Fitzpatrick similarly argued that the ‘conservative resurgence’ following the radicalism of many Easter Rising participants was ‘virtually complete’ by 1918 (*Politics and Irish Life 1913-21: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* (Dublin, 1977), p.233).

exposed to, and pressured to conform to, a republican ideal that emphasised strict moral principles.

The centrality of these principles meant that, for IRA leaders and propagandists, the discipline, respectability and composure amongst Volunteers were just as important as courage, power and aggression. The idealised form of masculinity was powerful and bellicose but mediated by respectability and restraint. These traits existed in tandem, but one side or the other could take prominence as and when necessary. For instance, during ambushes, aggression was paramount but during a large-scale propagandistic military funeral, respectability and discipline were key. Indeed, Charles Townshend has contended that the IRA was a ‘curious compound of the admirable and the unpleasant’ including ‘the chivalrous soldier and the cruel killer’.<sup>135</sup> Each of these figures is manly and neither is constant: a single Volunteer could fulfil both roles depending on the situation he found himself in. Some European militaries and paramilitaries in the early twentieth century did idealise the latter more than the former, ultimately valuing a chauvinistic and macho form of hyper-masculinity.<sup>136</sup> The martial masculinity imagined in the IRA was far more restrained, emphasising its discipline and respectability just as much as its courage and aggression. Julia Eichenberg has indeed contrasted the self-representation of Irish Volunteers as ‘chivalrous, well-disciplined and pious’ with the ‘pleasure in killing’ found in the recollections of the German *Freikorps*.<sup>137</sup> As a ‘para-state’ army attempting to forge

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<sup>135</sup> C. Townshend, ‘The Irish Republican Army and the Development of Guerrilla Warfare’, *English Historical Review* 94 (1979), p.344.

<sup>136</sup> The most obvious examples are of fascist masculinities (See Mosse, *Image of Man*, pp.155-180; S. Bellasai ‘The masculine mystique: antimodernism and virility in fascist Italy’, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10.3 (2005), pp. 314-335; B. Spackman, *Fascist virilities: rhetoric, ideology, and social fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis, 1996) and J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Superman supreme: fascist body as political icon - global fascism* (London, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> J. Eichenberg, ‘Soldiers to Civilians, Civilians to Soldiers: Poland and Ireland after the First World War’ in R. Gerwarth & J. Horne (eds.), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), p.198.

credibility and legitimacy in an anti-colonial struggle, the IRA had to maintain a level of virtuosity alongside its violent methods.<sup>138</sup>

The dual self-image of respectability and credibility alongside bellicosity and bravery was informed and certainly exacerbated by disparaging British stereotypes that depicted Irishmen as savage and unruly but simultaneously as weak and feminine.<sup>139</sup> Each strand of the stereotype ultimately presupposed the colonised Irish as unfit for and incapable of self-government.<sup>140</sup> Joseph Valente has theorised this ‘double bind’ of gendered colonial stereotypes about Irishmen and how ‘feminising discourses of Celticism’ and ‘bestialising discourses of simianisation’ came together to portray the Irish as ‘racially deficient in manhood’.<sup>141</sup> Whether they resisted British domination or not, their masculinity was called into question:

...the British elite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for *failing to meet* the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, that is, for being insufficiently courageous, powerful and unyielding in their resistance to colonial rule...[or] the British elite could deny the Irish their collective manhood for *exceeding* the fundamental standard of virile masculinity, that is, for being excessively violent and refractory in their resistance to colonial rule.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Eichenberg, ‘The Dark Side of Independence’, p.236.

<sup>139</sup> As Kevin Kenny has put it, ‘the colonial subject could be cast not only as feminine and weak but also, at times, as aggressively masculine - as worker or dispossessed tenant, simianised subaltern or simpleton, agrarian rebel or nationalist agitator’ (‘Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction’ in K. Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2004), p.17; The stereotype of the Irish as feminine had been most clearly disseminated in Matthew Arnold’s 1867 book, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* which argued that ‘the Celtic nature, and its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he had an affinity to it’ (p.108).

<sup>140</sup> The men of other colonised nations were stereotyped in the same dichotomous way but with the added dimension that they were not white men. See L. Lewis ‘Nationalism and Caribbean masculinity’ and S. Derné, ‘Men’s sexuality and women’s subordination in Indian nationalisms’ both in Mayer (ed.), *Gender Ironies of Nationalism* (London, 2000), pp.261-281, pp.237-258.

<sup>141</sup> J. Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture 1880-1922* (Illinois, 2011), p.11; Declan Kiberd has identified an adjacent, but less explicitly gendered, formulation of this dualism in British theatre and literature: the ‘vainglorious soldier’ and the ‘feckless but cheerily reassuring servant’ (*Inventing Ireland*, p.12).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, p.25.

Sikata Banerjee has also noted the manifestation of these stereotypes when it came to Irish political expression in the nineteenth century: when nationalist activism was rife, ‘caricatures of the “simianised” violent Paddy came to the fore’ but during more peaceful moments, the supposed effeminacy of the Irish was used as justification for British domination.<sup>143</sup> Such stereotypes had a long pedigree and were still commonplace in the revolutionary period as depictions of the IRA as both ‘cowardly and murderous’ corresponded with long-held stereotypes about inherent Irish violence and backwardness.<sup>144</sup> For Edward MacLysaght, such insulting British perceptions provided a catalyst for his radicalisation: ‘what probably drove a peacefully-inclined man like myself into rebellion was the British attitude towards us: the assumption that the whole lot of us were a pack of murdering corner boys’.<sup>145</sup> Seán Moylan, meanwhile, felt that ‘the real source of revolt in Ireland’ was the Irishmen’s ‘demand for a recognition of their manhood and for their rights as men’.<sup>146</sup>

The fight for independence was therefore formulated in part as an assertion and reclamation of masculinity. The Volunteers sought not only to establish a republic but to firmly refute and disprove attitudes that positioned Irishmen as inferior to their Anglo-Saxon neighbours. However, in disputing these stereotypes, many had simultaneously

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<sup>143</sup> S. Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004* (New York, 2012), p.32; S. Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000), p.53.

<sup>144</sup> J. Borgonovo, ‘Army without banners’: the Irish Republican Army, 1920-21’ in Borgonovo et al, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* p.396-7.

<sup>145</sup> E. MacLysaght quoted in R. Kee, *The Green Flag Volume Three: Ourselves Alone* (London, 1972), p.100; ‘Corner boy’ was a classed insult, inferring that the IRA were unemployed thugs engaging violence for its own sake.

<sup>146</sup> Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p.19; It was their rights as *white* men in particular that members of the republican movement sought to achieve and the struggle for recognition of Irish masculinity was intertwined with the struggle for recognition of Irish whiteness (See Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.4, 64, 107). When the Irish Volunteers were created in 1913, Joseph Plunkett wrote that ‘we the Irish people not only reassume our manhood, but once again voice our claim to stand among the nations of the world in the full tradition of Christian civilisation’ (quoted in *The Irish Volunteer*, vol.I. no.1 (7 February 1914), p.4). Erskine Childers was more explicit about the racial connotations when he wrote in a letter to *The Times* in 1919 that Ireland was ‘the last unliberated white community on the face of the globe’ (quoted in D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2004), pp.194-5).

internalised them. In their contentions about the need to improve the state of Irish masculinity, republican commentators would often echo British sentiments about the inadequate state of the nation's manhood.<sup>147</sup> Declan Kiberd has noted the 'surprising number of militant nationalists' who accepted the diagnosis of Irish femininity and perceived a need for young Irishmen to reclaim and restore their lost manhood.<sup>148</sup> Aidan Beatty, meanwhile, has listed numerous examples of prominent Irish nationalists who 'implicitly accepted' anti-Irish stereotypes that posited their fellow countrymen as 'emasculated', 'childlike', 'unhealthy', or possessing a 'slave mind'.<sup>149</sup> The militarisation of Irish society was a conduit through which its men could improve the state of their manhood and demonstrate that feminising British stereotypes were either unfounded or no longer applicable. These stereotypes had always, however, existed alongside conceptions of the Irish as violent, disorderly and even bestial. Therefore, the Volunteer leadership impelled their recruits to maintain a moral virtuosity alongside their performances of toughness and virility.

The desire to appear respectable as well as threatening shaped IRA methods or, at least, the methods that the army's General Headquarters encouraged local battalions to adopt. Maryann Valiulis has explored in detail the ways in which Richard Mulcahy, as the IRA's Chief-of-Staff during the War of Independence, fulfilled his *raison d'être* of creating an army that was visibly disciplined, credible and respectable. The 'basic position' underpinning his decision-making was that 'the honour of the army must be upheld'.<sup>150</sup> As a result, he set 'ethical limits' and high standards on soldiers' behaviour.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> For more in-depth discussion of this 'restoration' see R. Mytton, 'Chapter One: Resurrecting Irish Manliness', *Nationalist Masculinities and the Irish Volunteers 1913-1916* (University of Sheffield MA dissertation, 2016), pp.12-23.

<sup>148</sup> Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p.25; Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity*, p.97.

<sup>149</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, pp.35-37.

<sup>150</sup> Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, p.87.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*



Aspirations of credibility on a national scale naturally led to the adoption of the conventional practices of modern national armies. The most familiar was the British Army so, unsurprisingly, the IRA followed a British model in its practices and organisation.<sup>152</sup> John Borgonovo has listed the convening of ‘courts-martial’, the issuing of suppression orders to newspapers and the posting of curfews amongst the ways that the IRA borrowed ‘familiar language and symbols used by the British army’.<sup>153</sup> IRA GHQ also adopted formal military terminology in the memoranda sent out to battalions. This could, however, appear ‘pompous and pretentious’ to the Volunteers who saw themselves as doing the real physical work for Ireland whilst the likes of Mulcahy sat behind a desk.<sup>154</sup> This points to wider tensions between the IRA Staff in Dublin and local Volunteer units, and to the fact that top-down initiatives did not necessarily have a significant influence on everyday practices.<sup>155</sup> Nonetheless, GHQ would continually attempt to exert control and maintain the professionalism and respectability that Mulcahy desired. A general order from May 1920 stated that its purpose was not to ‘restrict in any way the “imperturbable offensive spirit” of our forces, but rather to preserve that spirit by preventing it running riot in hasty actions to its own detriment’.<sup>156</sup> The inclusion of this sentence suggests that leaders were conscious that their instructions

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<sup>152</sup> Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland 1900-1922’, p.401; John Horne puts the figure of Irish soldiers who served in the British Army during the First World War at 210,000 (J. Horne, ‘Ireland and the “Greater War”’ in Borgonovo et al, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* p.204); High profile IRA men who had served in the British Army include Tom Barry of the West Cork Brigade and commander at the 1920 Kilmichael ambush, and Emmet Dalton who acted as the IRA’s Director of Training. Peter Hart has noted that former British Army soldiers were initially considered enemies and rarely accepted into the IRA but ‘once the organisation became embroiled in a shooting war in 1920’, veterans were sought out to help with ‘weapons and training’ (*IRA & Enemies*, p.9).

<sup>153</sup> Borgonovo, ‘Army without banners’, p.397; The institutions of the new Free State also mimicked the British model in many respects, despite professing their difference. Fearghal McGarry has noted, for instance, that the Garda Síochána emulated the British policing model but ‘sought to express its distinctiveness through a self-conscious enunciation of its superior moral purpose’ (*Eoin O’Duffy*, p.121).

<sup>154</sup> Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, p.73.

<sup>155</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.213; Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland’, p.402; E. O’Halpin, ‘Problematic killing during the War of Independence and its aftermath: Civilian spies and informers’ in J. Kelly and M. A. Lyons (eds.), *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives* (Kildare, 2013), p.325.

<sup>156</sup> Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, p.52.

could be taken as an affront by local commandants, but they still maintained the narrative that untapped 'spirit' without discipline would have a negative impact and detract from the IRA's appearance as a respectable and credible organisation.

At a local level, however, the desire to appear legitimate could clash with the desire to take the most efficient route to military success. In other words, the methods that would bring about the greatest gains for the IRA were not often those that would give it the appearance of a chivalrous national army. This tension is well illustrated in the witness statement of Seamus Robinson recounting his role in the planning of the Soloheadbeg ambush in January 1919 when, in what has frequently but not universally been considered the first engagement of the War of Independence, Irish Volunteers, without official sanction, seized gelignite explosives from travelling RIC officers and killed two of them in the process. When his comrades suggested they 'rush out with a yell' to 'overawe and overwhelm' the RIC men, Robinson told them that such behaviour would resemble 'gorilla warfare rather than guerrilla tactics' and that it would 'betray an unsoldierly lack of discipline and self-control', creating a 'false impression of headstrong, headlong hardihood'.<sup>157</sup> In opposition to his comrade Dan Breen, who 'seemed to have lost control of himself declaring with grinding teeth and a very high-pitched excited voice that he'd go out and face them', Robinson did not want any 'Balaclava-like heroics'.<sup>158</sup> The fact that Robinson and Breen had such differing ideas about how Volunteers should behave is itself an indication of the difficulty that IRA leaders would have had in regulating the image that their soldiers projected. They may have been able to present their forces as wholly respectable, disciplined and morally sound through their propaganda operations, and they could issue orders and warnings directly to battalions,

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<sup>157</sup> BMH WS 1721, Seamus Robinson, p.25.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

but ultimately the reality of guerrilla warfare was far too messy and variable to be able to entirely control Volunteers' behaviours.

Volunteers did undeniably engage in acts of violence and intimidation that Chief of Staff Mulcahy and his peers would have deemed unbecoming of a national army.<sup>159</sup> Such actions were often presented as simply retaliatory, following the logic that the IRA would face defeat if they did not respond in kind to British atrocities. In June 1921, for example, Commander Liam Lynch, who would later become Chief-of-Staff of the anti-Treaty IRA, advised Mulcahy that they should execute one loyalist for every republican prisoner that was shot. In justifying such action, he wrote 'all lives must be considered sacred, and indeed we would all wish to be chivalrous but when the enemy continues such an outrage, let it be barbarous war all round'.<sup>160</sup> The IRA's descent into methods that were far from honourable was formulated as an unfortunate but necessary diversion from their virtuous essence.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, Volunteers used 'the language of due process' in order to justify, to themselves as much as to outsiders, dubious activities like the murder of suspected spies.<sup>162</sup> No matter their justifications, the image of IRA respectability set out in republican ephemera differed markedly from the violent realities of guerrilla warfare. The image of IRA identity that was projected to Volunteers themselves as well as to the outside world nonetheless remained one that was as respectable and disciplined as it was courageous and combative.

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<sup>159</sup> Indeed, it was certainly not only the Black and Tans that engaged in atrocities during the conflict. Eunan O'Halpin has, for example, explored instances where civilians were killed by the IRA as a result of unsubstantiated suspicions that they were spies or informers ('Problematic killing', pp.317-348); See also G. Clark, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge, 2014); The IRA and the Black and Tans would at times terrorise the civilian population with the same methods: both engaged in violent hair shearing practices against women believed to have committed traitorous acts in order to undermine their 'honour and dignity' and as a warning to others (Eichenberg, 'The Dark Side of Independence', p.242).

<sup>160</sup> Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary*, p.70.

<sup>161</sup> For more on the IRA's treatment of civilians, see Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, pp.272-315.

<sup>162</sup> O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing', p.324.

## Sacrifice and martyrdom

Notions of masculine courage, duty, commitment and selflessness converged in the idealisation of sacrifice and martyrdom in the Irish republican imagination. Self-sacrifice had a wide definition that covered ‘the love of one’s God, one’s country [and] one’s friends, more than oneself’ and was considered an essential component of an individual’s moral character, ‘part of [their] blood and breath through every moment of the day’.<sup>163</sup> Both republican men and women made substantial sacrifices of various kinds in the revolutionary period, but it was the sacrificial executions, deaths from hunger striking and deaths of Volunteers in combat that became integral to the narrative, self-perception and propaganda of militant republicanism. Dying for the nation was formulated as the ultimate test of Irish manhood and, from their inception through to the Civil War, Volunteers were continually exposed to a discourse that preached the value and righteousness of sacrifice.<sup>164</sup> Such a discourse had long been prominent in Irish republican circles and before 1916, Patrick Pearse was the most fervent and well-known advocate of masculine sacrifice, stating that ‘bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood’.<sup>165</sup> In

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<sup>163</sup> *The Ethics of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1917, p.6) [available at: <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland//images/uploads/further-reading/Ed120-EthicsOfSinnFein-NLI.pdf>].

<sup>164</sup> Death was not the only means by which Volunteers could make physical sacrifices; anything that involved ‘giving up ease and comfort and facing danger and privation and wounds’ was commended (*An tÓglách* vol.III. no.17 (16 July 1921), p.3); Sacrificial death was formulated as a specifically masculine endeavour in part due to a gendered conception of nationhood whereby Ireland was allegorically depicted as a woman and the male citizen was dutybound to protect and defend her (Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.24, 132; M. Ward, ‘Gender: Gendering the Irish Revolution’ in Augusteijn, *The Irish Revolution*, p.170; McDevitt, ‘Muscular Catholicism’, p.272; Kennedy, ‘*What Can Women Give But Tears*’, p.244).

<sup>165</sup> P. Pearse, ‘The Coming Revolution’ (November 1913) in *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork, 2012), p.84; The notion that bloodshed was sanctified was further propelled with the onset of the First World War as the potential bloodshed of the nationalist Irishman was aligned with the actual blood being shed by men on the continent. The souvenir booklet for the funeral of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa in 1915 described Father O’Flanagan’s panegyric in which ‘he said in reverbing tones that at this moment when all over Europe the red blood of fighting men was being poured out on the altar of patriotism, Irishmen also should be willing to risk danger, trials and sacrifice for love of Ireland...’ (NLI MS 13,174/12/1 Souvenir Booklet for Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral at Glasnevin Cemetery (1 August 1915), p.27).

accordance with republicanism's veneration of youth, it was specifically Ireland's young men who were expected to shed their blood for the nation: a 1915 issue of *The Irish Volunteer* proclaimed that, 'the sacrifice to be worthy must be paid by our best of blood' and therefore 'old men [would] not suffice... It is those who have everything to bind them to life must be prepared to launch everything into the pit of death'.<sup>166</sup> Pearse had conceived of the Easter Rising as an opportunity to put this rhetoric into action, reawakening the national spirit and rejuvenating the nation's masculinity through bloodshed and death. Having achieved his martyrdom through execution, Pearse's rhetoric gained prominence across the Irish nationalist milieu and ideals of sacrifice were an integral element in the ensuing years of revolution. A poem commemorating The O'Rahilly, who was killed in action during Easter week, encapsulated the rhetoric that linked martyrdom with the regeneration of manhood:

To save the waning manhood of his Race,  
His blood be shed; his very life laid down;  
By the sacrifice complete he won the grace  
Of Patriots brightest wreath - the martyr's crown<sup>167</sup>

The autograph book entries left by men who were interned and imprisoned after the Rising, meanwhile, are a testament to the pervasiveness of such sacrificial principles. They frequently professed the righteousness of sacrifice, and their own readiness to follow in the footsteps of their martyred leaders. Liam de Paor wrote that Pearse had taught his countrymen 'how men should die' whilst statements like 'a soldier's life the life for me - a soldier's death and Ireland free' and 'death before dishonour' littered the writing of numerous internees.<sup>168</sup> The young volunteer Kevin Carroll wrote in a 1916 prison hospital autograph book, 'I fought and bled for thee, dear Land and I am willing to

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<sup>166</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II no.34 (31 July 1915), p.4.

<sup>167</sup> NLI EPH B289 'To the Memory of The O'Rahilly' (1916).

<sup>168</sup> Frongoch 1916 autograph books; Dublin Castle Hospital May 1916 autograph books [all available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/books/>].

die for thee' and added that though he was 'only 16 ½ years of age', he 'took a man's part'.<sup>169</sup> J.J. Heuston, another internee, wrote in a letter to a friend on the outside that he had no regrets in becoming a 'soldier of Ireland' for 'it is better to be a corpse than a coward'.<sup>170</sup>

Such statements remained common amongst individuals and in the wider public discourse of republicanism throughout the period and beyond. In his witness statement written decades after the Easter Rising, Seán Prendergast affirmed that the executions of the leaders had 'proved beyond doubt that they were great men, noble men, true men'.<sup>171</sup> During the War of Independence, men who lost their lives through execution, hunger strike or battle were venerated in the pages of *An tÓglách*. A 1921 issue stated that

Each of our dead heroes is in himself a sublime and concentrated expression of the unbroken national will. The humblest private soldier of them fully typified the nation's heroic resistance as the most intellectual leader [sic]. Terence MacSwiney and Thomas Traynor speak the same message to their comrades of the Irish Republican Army. Not one jot of the sacrifice is wasted; there is not one drop of blood shed by a young man for Ireland but helps the fight for freedom. Those who were faithful to death have shown us how to be faithful to victory.<sup>172</sup>

The men who died in the service of the independence struggle were deemed to typify the spirit of the cause and their sacrifices were believed to be genuinely successful in

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<sup>169</sup> Dublin Castle Hospital June 1916 autograph book, available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/books/dublin-castle-hospital-june-1916/>.

<sup>170</sup> Letter from J.J. Heuston to Mr. E. Marsh (7 May 1916), S. Schreibman (ed.) *Letters of 1916* (Maynooth University, 2016); This affiliation of sacrifice and manliness was far from unique to the Irish case. Graham Dawson has, for example, noted that from the mid-late nineteenth century in Britain, 'a "real man" would henceforth be defined and recognised as one who was prepared to fight (and if necessary, to sacrifice his life) for Queen, Country and Empire' (*Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London, 1994), p.1).

<sup>171</sup> BMH WS 755, Seán Prendergast, p.168.

<sup>172</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no.13 (17 June 1921), p.2; Traynor was an IRA member executed in April 1921 for his involvement in an ambush on the British Auxiliary Division and Terence MacSwiney was a Volunteer and the Lord Mayor of Cork who died after a 74-day hunger strike in Brixton Prison in 1920.

advancing it. Ernest Blythe had, in fact, asserted years earlier in 1913 that ‘the fresh blood of the martyrs is all hope and pride and courage’ and that dying for Ireland was a ‘finer thing’ and ‘more profitable’ than ‘to win great victories’.<sup>173</sup> Death and bloodshed for the nation were seen as righteous and valuable in and of themselves but on a practical level, the death of a man for the republican cause could garner attention and support at home and abroad. Terence MacSwiney’s 1920 hunger strike in particular attracted sympathy for the cause and condemnation of the British from around the world.<sup>174</sup> As well as attracting international attention, sacrificial deaths were believed to have the effect of reawakening the rebellious spirit of the nation, thereby turning more Irishmen into Volunteers. MacSwiney himself had claimed in 1914 that if ‘Irish blood’ fell on ‘Irish earth’ there would ‘be kindled a crusade for the restoration of liberty that not all the powers of hell can defeat’.<sup>175</sup> In a way his prophecy came true, as the executions after the Easter Rising led to a surge in support for the republican ideal which gave way to the rise of Sinn Féin and later the establishment of Dáil Éireann. As in other European nationalist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, martyrdom provided a rhetorical device to ensure the cause appeared righteous and sacred.<sup>176</sup> Sacrifice, and the contingent values of courage and honour, were further entrenched across the continent by the First World War.<sup>177</sup> As a part of Britain, Ireland had been ‘saturated’ with propaganda that extolled ‘masculine martial service and patriotic self-sacrifice’, celebrated ‘the

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<sup>173</sup> E. Blythe in *Irish Freedom* (October 1913) quoted in Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.216.

<sup>174</sup> W. Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p.174.

<sup>175</sup> *Fianna Fáil* (September-December 1914) quoted in O’Hegarty, *Short Memoir*, p.57.

<sup>176</sup> See L. Riall, ‘Martyr Cults in Nineteenth-Century Italy’ *The Journal of Modern History* 82.2 (2010) for a case with particularly strong parallels with Irish republicanism. Riall argues that the figure of the martyr was used to make Italian independence and unity convincing: ‘martyrdom turned military failure into proof of an Italian valour that transcended death, defeat and political decline’ (p.256). For more on other European martyr cults see M. Vincent, ‘The martyrs and the saints: Masculinity and the construction of the Francoist crusade’ *History Workshop Journal* 47 (1999) pp.69-98 and K. Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870-1 in French Memory* (London, 2008), pp.152-174.

<sup>177</sup> Mosse, *Image of Man*, pp.109-110; Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.31.

willingness to kill or be killed in defence of one's country' and normalised violence.<sup>178</sup> Irish republican conceptions of martial manliness and sacrifice were not produced in a vacuum, and these wider British and European developments undoubtedly shaped understandings of masculinity amongst the Volunteers.

With martyrs held in supremely high esteem, those who faced the prospect of dying for the republican cause deemed it an honour and a privilege to join the pantheon of martyred men. Thomas MacDonagh expressed the 'sense of high...honour' he enjoyed 'in being one of those predestined to die in this generation for the cause of Irish freedom' whilst Terence MacSwiney professed the great 'privilege and happiness of entering the devoted company of those who died for Ireland'.<sup>179</sup> During the Civil War, meanwhile, Liam Mellows and Frank Cunnane each wrote in last letters before their respective executions that they were 'unworthy' of a martyr's death.<sup>180</sup> These men had witnessed and taken part in the veneration of martyrs that preceded them and would have been well aware that they would achieve the same status in death. There was a genuine sense of honour in that, but their words were also written for posterity. They were shared widely and worked to further promote the romantic rhetoric of martyrdom in the republican community.

That rhetoric, and the memory of the dead men more broadly, became contested in the debates surrounding the Anglo-Irish Treaty and Civil War. The figures of the martyred men of the earlier conflicts provided rhetorical ammunition as each side claimed to speak on their behalf and to know where their allegiances would lie.<sup>181</sup> In a

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<sup>178</sup> Borgonovo, 'Army without Banners', p.390.

<sup>179</sup> NLI EPH E254, Text of the final speech of Thomas MacDonagh addressed to the Court Martial (1916); UCDA P48b/435, 'The Lord Mayor of Cork: His Message to the Irish People throughout the World' (1920).

<sup>180</sup> NLI MS 055/8, Copy of letter from Frank Cunnane to his mother before his execution (10 April 1923).

<sup>181</sup> See D. Fitzpatrick, 'Commemoration in the Irish Free State: a chronicle of embarrassment' in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp.184-203 for more on 'the contest for possession of the Irish dead' in the Irish Free State.



1922 speech in the USA, Austin Stack claimed that the martyrs ‘would rather than enter the British Empire the blood of thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of our countrymen will be shed to prevent that outrage [sic]’.<sup>182</sup> On the other side of the divide, Richard Mulcahy stated that ‘any good Irishman, if assured that by dying he would secure for Ireland the benefits included in the Treaty would have died without hesitation’.<sup>183</sup> The discourse of martyrdom held such power in republican circles that it could be used as a validating and persuasive resource. Senia Paseta has argued that during the formal Treaty debates in the Dáil, women TDs used the language of sacrifice and evoked the memories of their dead sons, husbands or brothers in order to have their voices heard and taken seriously in ‘a context where the soldier-politician held sway’.<sup>184</sup> The figure of the sacrificed man came to signify the most ardent republican commitment and fervour so could therefore be wielded as a symbol of legitimacy.

The language of martyrdom was also imbued with legitimacy because of its association with Catholicism. There was a notable strand of anticlericalism within the republican movement and by no means all Irish Volunteers had had a Catholic upbringing. The language of martyrdom combined both religious and secular dimensions and it was certainly possible to celebrate martyrdom with no reference to or belief in religion.<sup>185</sup> Nonetheless, in most cases the adherence to ideals of sacrificial masculinity cannot be divorced from the Catholicism of the majority of Volunteers. Their Catholic faith provided a lens through which the cause in general, and sacrifice in particular, was

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<sup>182</sup> NLI MS 17,088, Speech by Austin Stack in Providence, USA (20 March 1922).

<sup>183</sup> R. Mulcahy quoted in C. Townshend, *The Republic*, p.352.

<sup>184</sup> S. Paseta, *Irish Nationalist Women 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2003), p.268; J. Knirck, ‘Women’s Political Rhetoric and the Irish Revolution’ in T.E. Hachey (ed.), *Turning Points in Twentieth Century Irish History* (Dublin, 2011), pp.39-56.

<sup>185</sup> As John Wolfe has argued, ‘..although Pearse’s thinking [on sacrifice] had distinctively Irish roots...it also needs to be seen in the context of wider currents of interest in both Christian and secular forms of martyrdom that were by no means unique to Ireland’ (‘The Mutation of Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland c.1850-2005’ in J. Kelly and M.A. Lyons (eds.), *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives* (Kildare, 2013), p.361).

understood, and a language through which both were articulated. The intimate interrelation of Christianity and conceptions of republican sacrifice is encapsulated in the speech given by Terence MacSwiney on taking the Mayoral Office of Cork after his friend and predecessor, Tomás Mac Curtain, was shot dead in his home by members of the RIC:

The liberty for which we today strive is a sacred thing – inseparably entwined as body with soul with the spiritual liberty for which the Saviour of man died, and which is the inspiration and foundation of all just government. Because it is sacred, and death for it is akin to the sacrifice on Calvary...our struggle is holy – our battle is sanctified by [martyr's] blood, and our victory is assured by their martyrdom. We, taking up the work they left incomplete, confident in God, offer in turn sacrifice from ourselves. It is not we who take innocent blood, but we offer it, sustained by the example of our immortal dead and that Divine example which inspires us all – for the redemption of our country.<sup>186</sup>

MacSwiney aligned the sacrifices of republican martyrs with those of Jesus Christ and in doing so presented the Irish republicanism cause as a holy one.<sup>187</sup> Few used language as extravagant and romanticised as MacSwiney's, but the overall message of his prose was not unusual. The Easter Rising in particular, and especially its sacrificial elements, was enveloped in the language and symbolism of Catholicism. John Newsinger has argued that many of the rebels in 1916 saw an 'absolute' identification between their Catholicism and their nationalism, believing themselves to be fighting, and if necessary dying, for both

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<sup>186</sup> T. MacSwiney (1920) quoted in O'Hegarty, *Short Memoir*, pp.76-9.

<sup>187</sup> MacSwiney was certainly not alone in making that connection between Irish republican martyrs and Christ. Patrick Hogan has argued that 'the cultural centrality of the story of Jesus provided Irish nationalists with a sacrificial paradigm for understanding their condition and for formulating responses to that condition', and 'the martyrdom of patriots...was [considered] parallel to the crucifixion' ('The sacrificial emplotment of national identity: Padraic Pearse and the 1916 Easter uprising', *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 5.1 (2014), pp.29-30).

‘Faith and Fatherland’.<sup>188</sup> For many, ‘the cause of Irish freedom was a cause of God’.<sup>189</sup>

This was certainly the impression given by Volunteer Brian O’Higgins who wrote that,

There was hardly a man in the Volunteer ranks who did not prepare for death on Easter Saturday, and there were many who felt as they knelt at the altar rails on Easter morning that they were doing no more than fulfilling their Easter duty – that they were renouncing the world and all the world held for them and making themselves worthy to appear before the Judgement Seat of God.<sup>190</sup>

Staging the uprising during Easter had been a symbolic choice and O’Higgins’s words take account of that.<sup>191</sup> The entwinement of Catholicism and republicanism in Volunteer conceptions of duty, sacrifice and masculinity continued through the revolutionary period to the Civil War when Liam Mellows wrote in the final letter to his mother ahead of his execution that it was only by following ‘the road our Saviour followed – the road of sacrifice’, that the citizens of Ireland could ‘be men’.<sup>192</sup> The relationship between the Catholic faith and Irish republicanism did, however, become far more complicated during the Civil War. Despite the long-held importance of Catholicism to the Irish republican ideal, the institutional Church had always taken issue with the violent methods of republican separatism through the long nineteenth century, choosing instead to align itself with constitutional nationalism.<sup>193</sup> The relationship became more ambiguous as Sinn Féin gained popular electoral support, and therefore legitimacy, after the Easter

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<sup>188</sup> J. Newsinger, “‘I Bring Not Peace but a Sword’: The Religious Motif in the Irish War of Independence”: *Journal of Contemporary History* 13.3 (1978), p. 625.

<sup>189</sup> Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.215.

<sup>190</sup> B. O’Higgins quoted in Newsinger, ‘I Bring Not Peace’, p.609.

<sup>191</sup> Catholicism was also incorporated into the Volunteers’ everyday experiences of Easter week as priests took confession, ‘whole battalions’ took Communion, and the Rosary was recited communally each night (Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.229).

<sup>192</sup> NLI MS 17,628/15, Copy letter from Liam Mellows to his Mother on the morning of his execution (8 December 1922).

<sup>193</sup> B. Heffernan, *Freedom and the Fifth Commandment: Catholic Priests and Political Violence in Ireland 1919-1921* (Manchester, 2014), p.3.

Rising.<sup>194</sup> During the War of Independence, some priests remained committed to the IPP but many had switched allegiance to Sinn Féin and a small number ‘threw their lot in with the radicals and gave support to the IRA campaign’.<sup>195</sup> When it came to the Civil War, however, Catholic bishops and priests were near unanimous in their belief in the legitimacy of the Free State and therefore condemned the actions of the anti-Treaty IRA and formally pronounced the excommunication of its members.<sup>196</sup> This did not stop anti-Treaty republicans invoking religious language when they faced their deaths, as the example from Mellows above demonstrates. Regardless of the Church’s position on republicanism and its methods, the language and symbols of Catholicism remained an important element of the republican worldview throughout the revolutionary period.

The piety of IRA members and their adherence to Catholic dogma undoubtedly varied significantly, but what remained relatively consistent was the way in which Catholicism provided a sense of spirituality and morality, and a language to express it, that was integral to the movement’s self-definition and in particular how it defined itself in opposition to Britain and British men. Since the Reformation of the sixteenth century had failed to take hold in Ireland, Catholicism had been bound to the evolution of Irish nationalism and to the development of both British and Irish notions of difference between the two islands.<sup>197</sup> By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this had evolved into a conception amongst Irish separatists that their nation was ‘spiritually and imaginatively preeminent’ whilst Britain, particularly since its industrialisation, was secular, materialistic, crude and even depraved.<sup>198</sup> Depictions of this dichotomous and

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<sup>194</sup> B. Heffernan, ‘The Catholic Church and the War of Independence’ in Borghonovo et al, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* pp.497-504.

<sup>195</sup> Heffernan, *Freedom and the Fifth*, p.122.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid*, p.240.

<sup>197</sup> McGarry, *The Rising*, p.10.

<sup>198</sup> J. Cleary, ‘Postcolonial Ireland’ in Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and Empire*, p.263; Laffan, *Resurrection*, p.224; T. Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland, 1858-1928* (Dublin, 1987), p.47.

value-laden relationship, which was an inversion of British conceptions of Ireland as backward and naïve, became commonplace in nationalist and republican discourse and propaganda.<sup>199</sup> In the revolutionary period, this duality – which had both religious and secular dimensions – fed into the representation, noted earlier, of the IRA as bastions of purity, respectability and morality in contrast to the corrupted and debauched British forces. Notions of Catholic morality and restraint coincided with secular notions of respectability and discipline to produce an image of the Volunteers as principled and decent men sacrificing themselves in the struggle against a tyrannical and dishonourable enemy.<sup>200</sup>

### Role models

The values and ideals of Irish republican martial masculinity become clear in the role models it chose to look up to, celebrate and emulate. In *An tÓglách* and other ephemera targeted at Volunteers specifically, but also in the wider Irish nationalist culture and discourse, figures of manly stature were promoted to inspire and to imitate. They could be saintly, mythical, ancient or a more recent republican martyr, but each functioned as a vessel through which the ideals of courage, discipline, sacrifice and commitment could be imbued in young revolutionary men.

As noted above, the Irish clergy had, historically, tended not to lend their support to physical-force Irish nationalism. They did, however, often concur with the rhetoricians

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<sup>199</sup> Declan Kiberd has described the process whereby negative British stereotypes were inverted by Irish nationalists to appear positive: 'backward' was replaced with 'traditional', 'superstitious' with 'religious' and so on (*Inventing Ireland*, p.30-2).

<sup>200</sup> Frances Flanagan has shown that 'Catholic morality' was also 'integral' to both Republican and pro-Treaty romanticised depictions of those who participated in the revolution after the event. Each side presented the revolutionaries 'as a kind of moral elite, possessed of superior inner mastery, bravery, spiritual purity, capacity for self-sacrifice and a heightened ability to resist the decadent 'West British' temptations of the music hall and alcohol' (*Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford, 2015), p.15).

of republicanism when it came to the values and role models of Irish manliness. Joseph Nugent has demonstrated how, in the long nineteenth century, the Church ‘appropriated the rhetoric of nationalism’, folded ‘its hagiology into the discourse of manliness’, ‘reshaped its heroes to fit the modern paradigm’ of masculinity and then ‘disseminated representations of its remodelled saints through the various organs, from Papal Bull to parish pulpit, at its command’.<sup>201</sup> The figure of St. Columba – Colmcille in Irish – was particularly important in this regard. In 1898, 600 future priests gathered at St. Patrick’s Seminary in Maynooth to establish the ‘League of St. Columba’ with the intention to present Colmcille as the model for, in their own words, ‘the actualisation of the authentic Irishman’.<sup>202</sup> The Church and its symbols had, of course, a significant influence on republicanism, and Colmcille became part of the iconography used to peddle ideals of an authentic Irish manliness that would be restored through insurrection. Patrick Pearse was a particular champion of Colmcille, propounding him as an ‘exemplar prototype’ of Celtic manliness at St. Enda’s, his school for boys.<sup>203</sup> The monastic ideal embodied in Colmcille was concurrent with both Catholic and republican ideals of spirituality, morality and self-discipline.<sup>204</sup> The legendary figure of Irish mythology, Cúchulainn, meanwhile, provided a role model for the other side of the republican masculine ideal that was characterised by heroism, valour and tenacity. His image was more in keeping with the violent methods of republican separatists, of which the clerical proponents of Colmcille tended to disapprove.<sup>205</sup> Standish O’Grady had, for instance, evoked the image

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<sup>201</sup> J. Nugent, ‘The Sword and the Prayerbook: Ideals of Authentic Irish Manliness’, *Victorian Studies* 50.4 (2008), p.591.

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

<sup>203</sup> E. Sisson, *Pearse’s Patriots: St Enda’s at the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, 2004), p.49.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Nugent, ‘The Sword’, p.606.

of Cúchulainn to 'galvanise the weakened generations of Ireland into an awareness of their heroic masculinity'.<sup>206</sup>

Though he was a mythical figure, Cúchulainn became an emblem of ancient Ireland where the purest of Irish masculinity was deemed to lie. The generalised figure of the ancient Gaelic warrior who was physically strong, patriotic and heroic, had become a role model in itself, taken to represent the manliness that modern Irishmen were lacking.<sup>207</sup> When the Irish Volunteers were created in 1913, a connection was established between the new organisation and generations of Gaelic warrior men who would not have stood for domination by a foreign enemy. Supporters presented their establishment as a reassertion and revivification of a natural but forgotten Irish manliness, which had apparently been ubiquitous in Gaelic Ireland.<sup>208</sup> Roger Casement, the diplomat turned Irish republican who was executed for attempting to garner German support for the Easter Rising, had written to a friend in 1914 that 'the whole raison d'être of the Volunteer movement is to bring Ireland from mendicancy to manhood'.<sup>209</sup> The actions of the Volunteers were presented as the realisation and continuation of a lost but inherent heroic spirit and the final edition of *The Irish Volunteer* published before the Easter Rising included the following lines:

Every Irishman has at some time wished that he had the opportunity given to the heroes of the Nation: every Irish Nationalist knows that the Irish Volunteers are the

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid, p.598; P.S. O'Hegarty aligned the character of Michael Collins with that of a mythical hero, even before he had died: 'In the last years of his life, Mick Collins became almost a legendary character. The things attributed to him were so varied and so heroic that they might easily be legends about a mythical hero' (*Victory of Sinn Féin*, p.23).

<sup>207</sup> Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots*, p.115; Valente, *Myth of Manliness*, p.187.

<sup>208</sup> Mytton, 'Resurrecting Irish Manliness', pp.12-23; The cultural notion of reasserting an authentic ancient masculinity was connected with political arguments about ancient constitutionalism which disputed Britain's legal claim over Ireland's governance (See S. Small, *Political Thought in Ireland 1776-1798: Republicanism, Patriotism and Radicalism* (Oxford, 2002), pp.15-16).

<sup>209</sup> NLI 36,203/03, Roger Casement to Hugh Law (8 June 1914), p.4.

hereditary descendants of the men who manned the Bearna Baoghail (danger gap) in all the ages. It is a privilege to live and die in the same service.<sup>210</sup>

In a similar vein, Liam Deasy recalled the ‘thrill’ of the early Volunteer parades – marked by adventure, secrecy, dedication and comradeship – as being ‘like signs of the return of the Golden Age of Ireland’s ancient chivalry’.<sup>211</sup> Such a rhetoric continued post-1916 as the Irish Volunteers became the IRA. In a 1920 poem, the hunger striking Terence MacSwiney’s masculinity was aligned with ‘the manhood of old of our forefathers bold’.<sup>212</sup> Similarly, Tom Barry presented Cathal Brugha’s ‘incredible courage’ as redolent of ancient Ireland: he ‘appeared to be the very reincarnation of those Irish warriors of yore, the story of whose bravery in battle has been handed down to us in song and in story’.<sup>213</sup>

This was all part of a broader idealisation of and nostalgia for a mythologised Gaelic past that revolved around a narrative of the ‘pre-Plantation Catholic Irish as the authentic Irish people’ that was peddled across ‘every conceivable medium of popular culture’.<sup>214</sup> The glorification of Gaelicism was reinforced through the various nationalist cultural organisation that developed around the turn of the century as well as through channels of formal and informal nationalist education and commemoration.<sup>215</sup> Aidan Beatty has, for instance, noted the role of the Gaelic League, formed in 1893, in reconnecting the men of Ireland with the nation’s ‘ancient heroic masculinity’ through Gaelic language and

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<sup>210</sup> *The Irish Volunteer*, vol. 2 no.71 (15 April 1916), p.3.

<sup>211</sup> L. Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free* (Dublin, 1973), p.8; The women of Irish republicanism could use similar language to evoke an idealised past. The prominent Sinn Féin activist and later MP Constance Markievicz wrote in 1915 that ‘what distinguished Ireland chiefly of old was the number of fighting women who held their own against the world, who owed no allegiance to any man, who were super-women – the Maeves, the Machas, the warrior-queens’ (C. Markievicz, *Irish Citizen* (23 October 1915) quoted in M. Ward (ed), *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Cork, 1995), p.51).

<sup>212</sup> UCDA P48B/462 (2), ‘Let Him Die’, Poem by G. O’Driscoll (1920).

<sup>213</sup> Barry, *Guerrilla Days*, p.303; Joe Good also evoked historical precedent to praise Brugha, describing him as ‘a lover of his fellow men, absolutely ruthless in action, and, in our movement, the “noblest Roman of them all”’ (Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, p.131-2).

<sup>214</sup> McGarry, *The Rising*, p.24, 36.

<sup>215</sup> See McGarry, *The Rising*, pp.8-43.



culture.<sup>216</sup> The idolisation of historic Gaelicism channelled into the idolisation of the traditional, rural Irish-speaking regions of the country, and the men who resided there were hailed as ‘the living repositories of a recovered Gaelic manliness’.<sup>217</sup> Contemporary Irishmen who laboured for a living in rural communities were deemed to possess a simple, muscular and authentic masculinity that had been rarefied as a result of urbanisation and industrialisation.<sup>218</sup> In turn, urban factory workers and city intellectuals were defamed. In a poem entitled ‘Dislikes’, Ernie O’Malley wrote the lines:

I do not like a womaned man  
Starched ‘til he is pale and wan<sup>219</sup>

Gavin Foster has argued that O’Malley’s words were indicative of a redefinition of respectability and masculinity amongst republican militants, whereby ‘traditional Irish rural life, farming, physical labour, and physical prowess’ were elevated over ‘the urban, middle class and white collar values associated with anglicised modernity’.<sup>220</sup> This conception of national manhood, and its adjacent Anglophobia, was captured in the way that *An tÓglách* contrasted the manhood of the Irish Volunteers with that of the British Army during the 1918 conscription crisis: ‘No pale, puny anaemic products of English factory towns, but the pick of Irish manhood, the product of our Irish soil, clean-limbed, strong and wholesome’.<sup>221</sup> Rural strength and simplicity became part of the

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<sup>216</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.97.

<sup>217</sup> Foster, *Irish Civil War and Society*, p.40; Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.97; A. Beatty, ‘The Gaelic League and the spatial logics of Irish nationalism’, *Irish Historical Studies* 43 (2019), pp.57-58.

<sup>218</sup> In a 1919 letter, Liam Mellows described a man he had encountered during the Easter Rising attempt he led in Galway in 1916 who seemed to typify this rural masculine character: ‘...a big powerful countryman, one of those simple honest and, as many I know here would denigrate, uncouth and ignorant fellows, stepped to the front and said, “We came out to fight for an Irish Republic, and now, with the help of God, we are not afraid to die for it.”’ (L. Mellows to Miss Herbert (February 1919) quoted in C. McNamara, ‘Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution’, *History Ireland* 19.4 (2011), p.36); Similarly, Peter Hart has noted that Volunteers in County Cork frequently presented themselves and their comrades as ‘plain’, ‘decent’, clean’ and ‘respectable’ (Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.148).

<sup>219</sup> E. O’Malley, ‘Dislikes’ (undated) quoted in R. English, *Ernie O’Malley: IRA Intellectual* (Oxford, 1998), p.157.

<sup>220</sup> Foster, *Civil War and Society*, p.98.

<sup>221</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.7 (30 November 1918), p.1.

organisation's self-image, but it was not an accurate depiction of their ranks. Peter Hart has noted that Florence O'Donoghue wrote that the IRA were 'predominantly a product of the country, having deeper roots in old traditions', whilst urban nationalism was 'shallow and rootless'.<sup>222</sup> In reality, the volunteers were 'disproportionately skilled, trained and urban'.<sup>223</sup> This distinction between rhetoric and reality demonstrates that there was a notable degree of creative license in the romanticised image that the IRA constructed of itself. Publicity was integral to the functioning and success of republicanism, and the propaganda machine tended to stick with an idealised coherent line regardless of the messy realities on the ground.

The rural, the traditional, the mythic and the religious, all provided a reservoir of values and characteristics to be idealised and advocated amongst Irish Volunteers. It was the martyrs of Irish republicanism from 1798 through to 1916, however, who received the greatest valorisation within the militant cadres of the revolutionary period. Martyrdom had long been integral to the ideology of Irish republicanism so when sixteen of the Easter Rising's leading men were executed in 1916, it was not seen as a stand-alone event. Rather, they joined the sanctified pantheon of republican martyrs and were revered alongside those who had died for the cause in previous centuries. The same process took place throughout the rest of the revolutionary period when a man died in the service of Irish independence. In his last letter ahead of execution in 1923, Liam Mellows wrote that he went 'to join Tone and Emmet, the Fenians, Tom Clarke, Connolly, Pearse, Kevin Barry and Childers'.<sup>224</sup> The man mentioned first was Theobald Wolfe Tone,

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<sup>222</sup> Hart, 'Social Structure', p.213; Such distance between idealised identity and actual identity was paralleled in Eoin O'Duffy's Free State Garda Síochána: 'The ideal recruit was an upstanding, rural, Gael with a sound national record: that many fell short of this ideal was ignored by the General who depicted the force as he envisioned it' (McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p.118).

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, p.212.

<sup>224</sup> NLI MS 49,487/10/4, Copy of Liam Mellows's last letter to his mother before his execution (8 December 1922).

the leader of the United Irish movement of the 1790s. As the original republican leader who had fought, suffered and died for the cause, Tone was held in particularly high esteem and presented as an exemplar model of masculine courage and sacrifice for Volunteers to emulate. Every year, his devotees made a pilgrimage to his resting place in Kildare and in a famous oration at his graveside in June 1913, Patrick Pearse referred to Tone as the 'greatest of Irish nationalists' and the 'greatest of Irish men' whilst calling on his peers to 'complete the work of Tone'.<sup>225</sup> The vision of Wolfe Tone held in the republican imagination of the early twentieth century was, however, a thoroughly manufactured one. Richard English has noted that Tone displayed indifference, contempt and misunderstanding towards the 'three pillars' of modern republican conceptions of Irish identity: Gaelicism, Catholicism and a celebration of the peasantry.<sup>226</sup> These facts were entirely disregarded in the construction of Tone as a prototype of modern Irish republican manliness. He patently did not fit with the ideals of Irish republicanism advocated by the likes of Patrick Pearse, but he was valuable as a figure of bellicose leadership and self-sacrifice so those features of his legacy were isolated in order to present him as a masculine role model for the Volunteers.

Tone did indeed occupy an important position in the political and historical consciousness of many Volunteers and, having often grown up in the environment of Irish cultural nationalism, recruits tended to be well-versed in the militant groups and protagonists that had preceded their own, whether they had been martyred or not.<sup>227</sup>

Patrick McCartan wrote in 1924 that he and his fellow separatists had 'saturated'

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<sup>225</sup> Townshend, *The Republic*, p.xv; P. Pearse, Wolfe Tone Graveside Address (22 June 1913) in P. Pearse, *Political Writings and Speeches*, p.57.

<sup>226</sup> R. English, 'Defining the nation: Recent historiography and Irish nationalism', *European Review of History* 2.2 (1995), pp.195-6.

<sup>227</sup> See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (pp.2-4) for a discussion of the 'Irish Renaissance' and the reflexive relationship between Irish national arts and culture and Irish republican politics and militancy.

themselves with 'writings by and about men of 1798, 1848 and 1867'.<sup>228</sup> These men were again presented as possessing a superior manliness to that found amongst twentieth century Irishmen prior to the advent of the Irish Volunteers and the blow struck at Easter 1916. This rhetoric took on a rather histrionic character in the words of Reverend D. Dineen, speaking at the Maynooth Union in 1915: 'The stricken corpse of a '67 man radiated more wisdom, more dignity, more vitality, more inspiration, and more helpful national energy than the other up-to-date Irishman could compass in the full stature of his palpitating manhood'.<sup>229</sup> This was a particularly ardent attack on the contemporary state of Irish manhood, but does point to the wider belief that Irish manliness had receded from its former glory. Also writing in 1915, Terence MacSwiney propounded the rebels of the past as role models for Volunteers to emulate:

Let those who are our inspiration stand forth in spirit from the past, challenging us to comradeship, that we may rise to the level of their nobility, their valour and their constancy. This is the spur to make us burn with pride and strive like heroes: and then we shall write the last chapter, and write it well.<sup>230</sup>

This conception of the Irish Volunteers as both emulating their predecessors and completing the work they had left unfinished remained popular throughout the revolutionary period and beyond. Joseph Lawless referred, in a retrospective account, to 'the great dead' watching 'approvingly over' the inception of the Irish Volunteer movement that eventually 'brought to a successful conclusion the centuries of war between the adjoining islands'.<sup>231</sup> His words are indicative of what Aidan Beatty has called the 'atemporal zone' in Irish republican rhetoric, 'wherein all true Irish nationalist

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<sup>228</sup> P. McCartan quoted in Foster, *Vivid Faces* p.145.

<sup>229</sup> Rev. D. Dineen quoted in *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II. no.30 (3 July 1915), p.7.

<sup>230</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II. no.34 (31 July 1915), p.5.

<sup>231</sup> BMH WS 1043, Joseph Lawless, p.53.

men exist together'.<sup>232</sup> This imagining of timeless brotherhood facilitated the tight entwining of the revolutionaries' actions with those of their predecessors, as is evident in Dan Breen's account of the Soloheadbeg ambush in 1919. Breen noted that Soloheadbeg was 'the location of a battle with the Danes in 968' and positioned himself and his comrades as 'only the latest in a long line of "gallant" Irish men fighting unwelcome invaders in this part of the country'.<sup>233</sup> The ambush was condemned by mainstream opinion, but Breen was consoled by the thought that 'the men of [17]98, the Fenians of [18]67 and the men of 1916 were condemned in their day'.<sup>234</sup> Indeed, historical precedent was highly valued and the Volunteers evoked the memory of generations gone by to derive their legitimacy.

Historic role models could be used to inspire and legitimise violence, but they primarily functioned as a conduit through which ideals of martial manliness could be inculcated amongst Volunteers. Images of past heroic Irishmen were used to motivate and inspire, and to herald the value of courage, sacrifice and duty to the nation.<sup>235</sup> The stock of masculine role models at the hands of republican rhetoricians was large and disparate, but what united them was their Irishness. The lives they had lived, or more accurately the lives they were depicted to have lived, were taken to signify a deep-rooted and fundamental manliness in Irishmen that would be drawn out and deepened through the revolutionary struggle.

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<sup>232</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.22, 44.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, p.21.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, p.22.

<sup>235</sup> The use of heroic figures to instil certain values was part of a wider European phenomenon. As Geoffrey Cubitt has argued, in modern western cultures 'the lives of heroes become playgrounds of the imagination, richly inviting terrains for ideological projection and mythical speculation' ('Introduction' in G. Cubitt and A. Warren (eds.), *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives* (Manchester, 2000), p.3.

## Conclusion

In March 1922, the anti-Treaty republican Austin Stack gave a speech in the USA in which he stated, to applause, that the Irish War of Independence had 'proved' that 'the cream of the manhood of the world, is the Irishman'.<sup>236</sup> The War of Independence in particular, but the lifecycle of the Irish Volunteers more broadly, had been conceived as an arena for the substantiation and exhibition of Irish manliness. Arming, fighting, suffering and dying for the nation were formulated as avenues through which Irishmen could both realise and demonstrate their manly credentials. This demonstration was for the enemy, for a wider Irish and world audience, as well as for republicans themselves. The state of the nation at large was believed to find embodiment in the state of its young men, and the actions of the IRA became a matter of national reputation as well as military success. A set of values and characteristics, stemming from the tenets of a specifically Irish republican culture as well as wider masculine and military norms, came together in the conception of martial manliness produced and continually promulgated amongst the Irish Volunteers and IRA. Some of these characteristics, like youth, were out of an individual's control but the majority were traits to be achieved like courage, discipline, honour and commitment. These were relatively flexible categories and could be accomplished and played out in a variety of ways for the various situations in which men found themselves during the turbulent years from 1916 to 1923. They converged in the ultimate test of republican manliness: self-sacrifice.

The principles of Irish republican martial masculinity did adhere to wider conventions of masculinity in Europe in this period, but their particular configuration in the Volunteers was part of a specifically republican project of proving the tenability and

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<sup>236</sup> NLI MS 17,088, Speech by Austin Stack (Providence, 20 March 1922).

righteousness of their enterprise. The ambiguous colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland was marked by disparaging and patronising British suppositions about the nature of Ireland and its people, and why that nature made them unfit for self-government. The frustrations stemming from these stereotypes produced in the republican movement a desire not only to rid Ireland of British influence, but to prove that Ireland was *better* than Britain. The Irish Volunteers were envisaged as the organisation that could do both. This duality of purpose produced a conception of republican martial masculinity that valued discipline, respectability and obedience as much as it valued gallantry, virility and stoicism. The ideal Irish Volunteer presented in republican discourse would be as gracious as he was valorous; he would have a sound sense of morality and self-control but would not shy away from violence against the oppressor when it became necessary. These were the basic rules of martial masculinity cultivated within the militant organisations of revolutionary Irish republicanism. The impact that these rules had on the lives of their members will be the focus of the following four chapters.

## Chapter Two: Producing Military Masculinity on the Public Stage

In September 1917, Thomas Ashe, who had been on hunger strike at Mountjoy Jail, died as a result of complications with force feeding. Many years later, Colonel Joseph Lawless, who had served under Ashe's command during the most significant engagement of 1916 outside Dublin at Ashbourne in County Meath, recalled that,

Ashe's courage was simply demonstrated that day at Ashbourne, for to those who watched him as he moved about, issuing orders or seeking information during the action, the imminence of sudden death omnipresent in the sound of enemy bullets seemed to be the least of his concern...His disregard of personal danger might in one sense be considered foolhardy. The fact was, I think, that he saw himself as one of the principal actors in a great drama of real life, and acutely conscious of his responsibility for playing the part in consonance with the great traditions of history, the minor considerations of personal safety were ignored by him, or were considered incompatible with the role he had adopted.<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the countless descriptions that republican men wrote about the bravery of their comrades during the revolutionary period, Lawless's words stand out for their explicit recognition that Volunteers were playing a role and sought to play it well. As the historian of masculinity John Tosh has argued, 'public affirmation was, and still is, absolutely central to masculine status'.<sup>2</sup> Republican militants, under the guidance and regulation of manly ideals, fashioned their public appearances and actions in a way that affirmed their own personal, and the IRA's collective, masculine credentials. 'Public' is used here to refer to any arena with some form of 'audience' whether that be the wider populace, the

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<sup>1</sup> NLI MS 44,032/1, J. Lawless, 'Thomas Ashe: A Biographical Sketch', *An Cosantóir* (undated); *An Cosantóir*, the official magazine of the Irish Defence Forces, was established in 1940.

<sup>2</sup> J. Tosh, 'What should historians do with masculinity? Reflections on nineteenth century Britain', *History Workshop* no.38 (1994), p.184.



enemy or other Volunteers. The norms and ideals valued in republican culture became embodied practices as Volunteers deployed a variety of resources to construct and display their individual and collective identities. Through their actions and appearances, they made themselves legible to their audiences.<sup>3</sup> The last chapter provided an outline of what the valued traits of Irish republican martial manliness were, whilst this chapter will explore the ways in which that manliness was produced and performed through the appearances, actions and demeanours of Irish Volunteers.

Whilst all individuals have a degree of agency in how they express their gendered identity, that agency is constrained by societal, cultural and institutional regulation. Constraint and regulation are particularly tight in all-male military organisations where the pre-existing norms of masculinity and values of manliness are amplified, intensified and formalised.<sup>4</sup> For those who joined the paramilitary Irish Volunteers, the markers of their everyday lives were remodelled to fit the new militarised climate. In Peter Hart's words, 'the "boys" had become "soldiers", friendships became "conspiracies", fields and crossroads became "secret rendezvous", and sheds and abandoned houses became "the barracks"'.<sup>5</sup> These reformulated environments provided the stage on which martial masculinity was both earned and performed. The Easter Rising in 1916 was the first opportunity for the Volunteers to prove that martial masculinity in combat, and the theatricality of the rebellion has been widely noted.<sup>6</sup> The language of performance has

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<sup>3</sup> The notion that identities and selves are constructed through action has been widely theorised from sociological and historical perspectives, both in relation to and apart from gender. Important texts on the topic that have informed this chapter include Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London, 1959), Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago, 1980), Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, 1990) and Joan Scott's *Gender and the politics of History* (New York, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> P. Higate and J. Hopton, 'War, Militarism and Masculinities' in M.S. Kimmel, J. Hearn and R.W. Connell (eds.), *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (London, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> P. Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), p.204.

<sup>6</sup> J. Moran, *Staging the Easter Rising: 1916 as Theatre* (Cork, 2005); C. Wills, 'Staging the Rising' in J. Borgonovo, J. Crowley, D. O Drisceoil and M. Murphy (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (New York, 2018), pp.283-289; R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces* (Oxford, 2015), pp.77-8, p.230; T. Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*

not, however, so readily been applied to the wider revolutionary period and nor has the thoroughly gendered nature of the roles being played been sufficiently drawn out. From the inception of the Volunteers onwards, the requirements of a distinctly manly role were instilled into recruits and in most cases, they took on that role obligingly.

The words 'performance', 'stage' and 'role' do not necessarily imply a calculated decision-making process preceding men's behaviours. As Erving Goffman iterated in his foundational dramaturgical theory, performances of self can be cynical, sincere or somewhere in between: an individual may be highly conscious of his behaviour and the response he intends to elicit, or he may be relatively unconscious of audience response and consider himself to be expressing his authentic self.<sup>7</sup> In both the conscious and unconscious decisions, his behaviour is informed by internalised cultural norms and ideals. Whether or not the act that he commits has a specific underlying intention, it remains a presentation, or performance, of selfhood and identity. As such, 'performance' not only refers to planned, contrived behaviour but to any behavioural, gestural or sartorial choices which convey individual or collective identity. This definition is deployed alongside a recognition that those identities are themselves shaped and constrained by gendered cultural forces.

Amongst Irish Volunteers, the idealised traits of manliness were produced and displayed in myriad ways from subtle acts of gesture through to large-scale and intentionally propagandistic collective rituals like public funerals. The concern of this chapter is with actions and appearances that have discernibly been influenced by

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*in Ireland 1858-1928* (Dublin, 1987), p.170; J. Elliott *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity in Dublin, 1890 - 1917* (PhD thesis) (University of Warwick, 2013), pp.136-150; An example of the way in which the Rising can be seen more as a piece of public theatre than a bid for military success is the decision of the leaders to occupy symbolically significant buildings rather than those that could be easily defended (Elliott, p.138).

<sup>7</sup> Goffman, *Presentation of Self*, p.17-18.

contemporary notions of what it was to be a good Volunteer and a 'true' Irishman. These actions and appearances could be individual or collective, but both worked to produce the disciplined, stoic, respectable, courageous image that the Irish Volunteers and IRA sought for themselves. Broadly speaking, formal collective actions that displayed manly ideals, such as drill marches, were consciously curated by local Volunteer leaders or IRA GHQ, whilst individual actions that displayed manly ideals were not pre-prepared but a product of internalised notions of how a Volunteer should conduct himself. Acts of propaganda in which a consciously masculine image was constructed for a given audience, as well as individual actions where we can detect the pressure to display manly courage and stoicism, feature in this chapter. Whether a performance of manliness was planned or spontaneous, conscious or unconscious, the product of bravado or internalisation, they all produced the idealised vision of manliness celebrated in republican military discourse and sought after in republican military circles.

In his study of the Volunteers of late eighteenth-century Ireland, Padhraig Higgins noted that rousing speeches given to the civilian-soldiers frequently reflected on what it meant to be manly and courageous in service of the nation.<sup>8</sup> Many reminded Volunteers of the importance of a manly performance by invoking a bible passage from the second book of Samuel in which 'Joab leads the army of Israel to repel the forces of the Ammonites and exhorts them to "play the men"'.<sup>9</sup> Over a century later, the Irish Volunteers and IRA were similarly compelled, and impelled, to 'play the men' in their individual and collective endeavours, through the way they presented themselves and in the choices they made.

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<sup>8</sup> P. Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (London, 2010), p.162.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

### Physical appearance and sartorial decisions

The physical appearances of the Volunteers were integral to their achievement of manliness and their credibility as a respectable, formidable and legitimate military force. The ideals of republican martial manliness were played out in the embodied practices of recruits. Whilst the majority of this thesis pertains to the way that ideals of manliness shaped subjectivities, experiences and actions, the somatic and sartorial appearances of manliness remain essential to the production of masculinity. The bodily manifestation of manliness, that way that manliness *looked*, must be considered in any discussion of performed masculinities. A man's physique, clothing, bearing, posture, movement and athleticism were all tools on which to draw, sometimes consciously and sometimes not, in the conjuring of a manly appearance.

Modern male bodies, particularly those found in military organisations, have faced consistent assessment and scrutiny from other men.<sup>10</sup> Both contemporary and retrospective sources from the Irish revolutionary period show that members of the Irish Volunteers and IRA were often highly aware of their fellow soldiers' appearances. Elaine Sisson has argued that the discourses of 'male heroism' and 'sporting camaraderie' found in Irish nationalism produced a culture where it was typical for men to praise and admire each other's bodies and physical prowess.<sup>11</sup> Accounts celebrating martyred



Figure 2: NLI NPA POLF236, Portrait of Patrick Pearse (undated).

<sup>10</sup> V. Robinson and J. Hockey, *Masculinities in Transition* (Basingstoke, 2011), p.81.

<sup>11</sup> E. Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, 2004), p.137.

men in particular often commented at length on their attractive and robust appearances. A typically masculine appearance was not only taken to denote strength and virility, but an honourable and moral manly character.<sup>12</sup> Patrick Pearse was described in the 1940s as having had a ‘magnificently shaped head, with broad, high forehead, eyes well set apart and firm mouth’ and the writer argued that these ‘features portrayed the man of action who found kindred spirits in such revolutionaries as Tom Clarke and James Connolly’.<sup>13</sup> It was the physical size of a man, rather than his facial features, however, that was most commonly celebrated and used as a signifier of his masculine stature. Seán MacEntee described Pearse’s appearance at length in his account of the Easter Rising:

Tall, broad shouldered and commanding his presence filled the room. Dressed in the Volunteer uniform, there was an air of dignity and power about him as he stood for a moment exchanging greetings with those around. I was never before so impressed by the bigness of any man...His somewhat show, deliberate movements, his physical bulk overshadowing the slight and smaller figures of his companions, the high-seriousness of his face...the air of mastery and command and control which he bore...Had a stranger entered the room, he would naturally have assumed that Pearse was the chief person there.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The belief that an individual’s character could be gleaned from their facial features – termed ‘physiognomy’ – had reached its peak in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland. See K. Barclay, ‘Performing Emotion and Reading the Male Body in the Irish Court, c. 1800-1845’, *Journal of Social History* 51.2 (2017), pp.293-312 for a discussion of the role of physiognomy in the early nineteenth-century Irish court.

<sup>13</sup> J. Brennan, ‘The Executed Leaders’ in B. Ó Conchubhair, *Dublin’s Fighting Story 1916-21: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.157; Patrick Pearse had, in fact, been self-conscious about his appearance due to a squint in his left eye and therefore always posed sideways in portraits. See B. Crowley, *Patrick Pearse: A Life in Pictures* (Cork, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> UCDA P67/7 Seán MacEntee’s incomplete account of his activities during Easter Week 1916 [undated]; Writing in 1917, James Stephens questioned such appraisals of Pearse, stating that he ‘never could ‘touch’ or sense in him the qualities which other men spoke of, and which made him military commandant of the rising’ and asserted that he was ‘less magnetic’ than the other Rising leaders (*The Insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1917)). As the man who read the proclamation of independence in 1916, Pearse occupied a highly significant role in republican commemorative culture after his execution. Part of that commemoration involved a posthumous reconstruction of his life, character and appearance that smoothed over any aspect which deviated from the typical heroic role. See Sisson, *Pearse’s Patriots* for a discussion of the posthumous ‘heterosexualising’ of Pearse (pp.137-138).

Pearse's size is here aligned with dominance, and the description also points to a conscious theatricality in his performance and appearance as a masculine leader. MacEntee may have been impressed by the 'bigness' of Pearse, but it was Michael Collins who was given the nickname, 'the big man' or 'the big fellow'. The name derived from Collins's physical size but was extended to remark on the dimensions of his character. In a gushing obituary written in the first issue of *An tÓglách* printed after Collins's death, Piaras Béaslái wrote that the nickname was 'obviously appropriate' for he was 'big' in body as well as mind and heart, whilst in a later commemorative booklet he described the 'great broad-minded and broad-hearted nature of the man...A Big Man indeed!'.<sup>15</sup> He later detailed 'his big, broad, generous statesmanlike mind, in the midst of a crisis when smaller men would lose their heads'.<sup>16</sup> It is unlikely that Béaslái was referring here to men who were literally smaller than Collins. Rather, physical size is used as a synonym for masculine stature and heroism. P. S. O'Hegarty similarly described Collins as being in 'his full manhood' with 'a big frame and a big heart', and Kevin O'Higgins described him as 'big and human'.<sup>17</sup> Both Pearse and Collins were leaders and figureheads of the republican cause, and each was sacralised after their deaths. Descriptions of their masculine physiques worked to consecrate their status as legendary warriors and heroes who typified the virility of the nation and the independence struggle, akin to those found in adventure stories and chivalric myth. Such figures embodied the performative manly ideal and slotted neatly into the heroic narrative of republicanism. During the revolutionary period itself, the protagonists of the movement accrued a heroic status

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<sup>15</sup> *An tÓglách* vol. IV no. 12 (26 August 1922), p.1; NLI MS 33,914/16, *Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins* commemorative booklet [undated].

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin: How It Won It and How It Used It* (Dublin, 1924), p.27; NLI MS 33,914/ 16, K. O'Higgins, 'The Quenching of our Shining Lamp' in *Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins* commemorative booklet (undated).

amongst their followers and it was presumed that they would have a warrior-like appearance to match. Therefore, when Frank O'Connor and his comrades first met Erskine Childers, whom they regarded as one of the 'great romantic figures of the period', they were disappointed by his 'thin, grey face' and 'clear, pale and tragic' eyes.<sup>18</sup> Childers did not meet the physical ideal of manliness, and so did not match up in person to the narrative that surrounded him as a well-regarded name within the Volunteer movement.

One man who was consistently praised for his appearance, and who undoubtedly 'looked the part' was Thomas Ashe. Batt O'Connor described seeing Ashe's dead body in 1917, when his 'splendid young physique' was still 'in the full strength and beauty of manhood'.<sup>19</sup> Joseph Lawless also described Ashe after his death as a 'fine specimen of virile manhood' and an 'example of the typical Celtic physique' for he was 'well over six feet in height' and 'broad and muscular'.<sup>20</sup> The alignment of Ashe's physical stature with a stereotypical Celtic archetype is indicative of the broader republican nostalgia for an apparently lost manhood in need of reclamation. The fact that Ashe was from the Gaelic-speaking West of Ireland, where the remnants of authentic Irish manhood were deemed to lie, fortified his association with 'the typical Celtic physique'.<sup>21</sup> Seán Prendergast indeed asserted that his 'death, perhaps more than his life, was a complete vindication of a true son of Gael'.<sup>22</sup> Ashe was also a product and proponent of the Gaelic Renaissance project of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which, along with other European nationalist movements at the time, advocated the cultivation of the muscular

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<sup>18</sup> F. O'Connor, *An Only Child* (London, 1961), p.211-2; O'Connor was a prolific writer by the time he wrote this autobiography and it is more literary in nature than typical Volunteer recollections.

<sup>19</sup> B. O'Connor *With Michael Collins in the Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 1929), p.103.

<sup>20</sup> NLI MS 44,032/1, J. Lawless, 'Thomas Ashe: A Biographical Sketch', *An Cosantóir* [undated].

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> BMH WS 755 (ii), Seán Prendergast, p.226.



Figure 3: NLI NPA POLF1, Portrait of Thomas Ashe (undated).

male body ready for military engagement.<sup>23</sup> Patrick McDevitt has illuminated the role of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in this regard, and its intention to produce 'beautiful, healthy and vigorous Irish male [bodies]' through Gaelic sports.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Sinn Féin had praised the GAA for its cultivation of disciplined muscular men who could demonstrate to the world that Ireland was not 'a

nation of weaklings'.<sup>25</sup> The muscular male body was, then, partly a performative entity. It served a practical purpose by strengthening the nation's young men, but it also displayed the manly credentials of the movement at large through the individual corporeal soldier. Depictions of a typical masculine appearance also served a function in retrospect, and those who had died in the service of the cause were remembered as strapping, handsome warrior-types in order to suit the heroic narrative of Irish republican struggle.

Those whose appearances did not meet this muscular ideal were not, however, denied their full manliness as a result. Rather, their manly comportment and their inner strength and honour were presented as making up for what they lacked in physical size

<sup>23</sup> See G.L. Mosse, 'Getting There' in *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1998), pp.40-55 for a discussion of the development of bodily cultivation in European nations.

<sup>24</sup> P.F. McDevitt, 'Muscular Catholicism: Nationalism, Masculinity and Gaelic Team Sports, 1884-1916', *Gender and History* 9.2 (2002), p.265.

<sup>25</sup> *Sinn Féin* (1910) quoted in Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.63; The GAA were integral to what David Lloyd has called 'the attempt to transform the "turbulent" Irish male body, whose habits were the end result of colonialism, into a disciplined and moral labouring as well as fighting body, one on whose productivity the future prosperity of the nation might be predicated' (*Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity 1800-2000: The Transformation of Oral Space* (Cambridge, 2011), p.100).



and appearance. Seán Moylan wrote that his comrade Davy McAuliffe was ‘small, thin and delicate, yet his spirit overcame his physical deficiencies, his energy was inexhaustible and I always envied him his cool and courage’.<sup>26</sup> Joe Good, meanwhile, described the 1916 Proclamation signatory Tom Clarke as ‘a quiet gentle little man’ who had ‘nothing in his appearance to suggest that he was an old Fenian of the earlier generation. And yet, he was the Revolution’.<sup>27</sup> P.S. O’Hegarty similarly described Arthur Griffith as a ‘small man, modest in appearance’ but one who represented ‘power, intellect and determination’.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 4: NLI TC 33, Tom Clarke (middle) and Seán MacDiarmada (right) with John Daly (1915).

Disabled men could also be presented in this rhetorical framework. The Easter Rising Proclamation signatory Seán MacDiarmada suffered with polio and walked with a stick.<sup>29</sup> Mortimer O’Connell described in his witness statement how MacDiarmada was able to ‘overcome’ his ‘terrible disability’ with his ‘amazing courage and fortitude’, whilst Seán Prendergast wrote that his

<sup>26</sup> S. Moylan, *Seán Moylan: In His Own Words: His memoir of the Irish War of Independence with a selection of speeches and poems* (Cork, 2004), p.96.

<sup>27</sup> J. Good, *Enchanted by Dreams: The Journal of a Revolutionary* (Kerry, 1996), p.64.

<sup>28</sup> O’Hegarty, *Victory of Sinn Féin*, p.128.

<sup>29</sup> His fellow signatory, Joseph Plunkett, was also significantly disabled during the Easter Rising having ‘risen from his deathbed’ to take part (Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, 49). His frailty and endurance are discussed further in the next section.

‘infirmity did not in the slightest degree prevent him taking a man’s part’ in physical-force republicanism.<sup>30</sup> He was described by Joe Good, meanwhile, as ‘little Seán McDermott’ who, despite his disability, possessed a ‘superman vitality’ which rivalled that of Michael Collins.<sup>31</sup> As a martyr of the Rising, MacDiarmada occupied a particularly high heroic status and the fact that he did not meet a muscular, physically powerful ideal did not detract from that.<sup>32</sup> Rather, his disability was presented as an obstacle he overcame *because* of his morally virtuous manliness. Such examples suggest a tacit acceptance of the stereotypical affinity of physical appearance and manliness, but also a belief that masculine stature could be achieved by performing certain feats and traits *despite* one’s appearance, size, disablement or age.

These differences in physicality amongst Volunteers were smoothed over somewhat by the organisation’s attempts at sartorial uniformity. From the creation of the Irish Volunteers onwards, male bodies were adorned with military clothing and props in order to foster the image of a united, legitimate and honourable army. Particularly in those early years before actual military engagement was in sight, the aesthetics of militarism were crucial. David Fitzpatrick has referred to the ‘extraordinary outburst of mimetic militarism’ in 1913 and 1914 when ‘a large proportion of Irish adult males began to train, dress and strut about in the manner of soldiers’.<sup>33</sup> Before they had acquired guns, for example, Volunteers trained in public with props like ‘staves, pitchforks, shovel handles, and wooden guns’.<sup>34</sup> The simulation of militarism served a function beyond

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<sup>30</sup> BMH WS 804 Mortimer O’Connell, p.15.

<sup>31</sup> Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, p.51.

<sup>32</sup> This was, perhaps, compounded by the fact that MacDiarmada was considered to have a particularly handsome face by both men and women alike. Richard Mulcahy wrote retrospectively that he was ‘an extremely handsome boy, a beautiful head and a sallow complexion that had a certain beauty of its own, you know, and lovely outline of face’ (quoted in Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.129). See BMH WS 1164 Michael Manning, p.2 and BMH WS 359 Aoife de Burca, p.16 for more examples.

<sup>33</sup> D. Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland 1900-1922’ in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffrey (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997), p.383.

<sup>34</sup> F. McGarry, *The Rising* (Oxford, 2010), pp.69-70.

training, preparation and fitness. By behaving and looking like soldiers, the Volunteers sought to cultivate the appearance of military legitimacy for all, including their enemies, to see.

The Volunteer uniform was the cornerstone of that appearance. The organisation's official uniform was designed in August 1914, and consisted of a 'grey green' tunic, trousers, puttees and cap with a badge designed by Eoin MacNeill bearing the initials 'FF' for Fianna Fáil, the warriors of Irish mythology.<sup>35</sup> Volunteers had to pay for their own uniforms and they were therefore not compulsory, although Officers were expected to acquire them.<sup>36</sup> Those rank and file members who could not afford an official uniform would often cobble together a military appearance from whatever was available to them. Volunteer leaders encouraged such enterprise, for example recommending in 1915 that men dye their existing clothes green.<sup>37</sup> The expense of the uniform at 25 shillings meant that many recruits had to resort to such initiatives and a significant proportion of the 1916 rebels therefore had a rather 'haphazard, homemade appearance'.<sup>38</sup> In the absence of official uniforms, these Volunteers with financial restraints used their initiative and their comprehension of how a 'real' soldier should look in order to self-fashion and display military identity and belonging. They could, of course, have taken part in entirely civilian clothing – many IRA engagements of the later War of Independence and Civil War were carried out in largely civilian attire to evade recognition – without any substantive impediment to their military success. But as the Rising was an armed proclamation of independent nationhood, the visual semblance of

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<sup>35</sup> E. MacNeill and L. J. Kettle, 'The Volunteer Uniform Report' (12 August 1914) and N. MacNeill 'The Volunteer Cap Badge' in F.X Martin (ed.) *The Irish Volunteers: Recollections and Documents* (Dublin, 1963), p.139, p.143.

<sup>36</sup> L. Joye, 'The Irish Volunteer Uniform', *History Ireland* vol.21 no.6 (November/December 2013), p.37.

<sup>37</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.2 no.31 (10 July 1915), p.2.

<sup>38</sup> Joye, 'Volunteer Uniform', p.37; J. Tynan, 'The Unmilitary Appearance of the 1916 Rebels' in L. Godson and J. Bruck, *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising* (Liverpool, 2015), p.26, 29.

militarism mattered in and of itself as a symbol that conveyed to observers, and instilled in Volunteers, a sense of legitimacy, power, discipline and cohesion.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the messy aesthetic reality, propaganda images of the Rising ‘almost invariably depict the rebels in [official] uniform’.<sup>40</sup> Volunteer leaders were acutely conscious of the visual significance of a military uniform and its role in presenting an image of power, uniformity and legitimacy as well as in instilling a sense of fellowship, belonging and discipline. The military uniform was the foremost component of the ‘visual lexicon’ of their martial masculinity.<sup>41</sup> First the *Irish Volunteer* and then *An tÓglách* preached the importance of a proper military appearance and listed ‘attention to dress’ and ‘correct turn out’ amongst the duties that Volunteers must fulfil in order not to ‘discredit’ the organisation.<sup>42</sup> Uniforms have always been a feature of organised modern armies – and many paramilitaries too – as a matter of discipline, to inspire ‘pride in the aesthetic qualities of men as a group’, and to enhance ‘men’s masculine appearance’.<sup>43</sup> They also served to homogenise the military grouping, erasing difference and creating a sense of unity through the ‘illusion of sameness’.<sup>44</sup> Simultaneously, the specific composition of the uniform could display national distinctiveness. Jane Tynan has argued that the uniform of the Irish Volunteers used ‘signifiers of Irishness’, like the ‘FF’ cap badge, to fashion a ‘distinctly Irish identity’.<sup>45</sup> The military uniform was deemed to

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<sup>39</sup> The military imagery and symbolism of the Rising also served to establish a connection with the rebellion of 1798: as Jack Elliott has pointed, some of the 1916 rebels carried pikes despite the fact they were ‘completely useless for modern street warfare’ because they had been used in 1798 and were therefore of ‘symbolic importance’ as ‘an iconic reference to a tradition of Irish insurrection’ (*Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity in Dublin, 1890 – 1917*, pp.146-7).

<sup>40</sup> McGarry, *The Rising*, p.131.

<sup>41</sup> M. Vincent, ‘*Camisas Nuevas: Style and Uniformity in the Falange Española*’ in W. Parkins (ed.), *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender, Citizenship* (Oxford, 2002), pp.169.

<sup>42</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no.27 (23 September 1921), p.2.

<sup>43</sup> J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1996), p.128.

<sup>44</sup> E. Otto, ‘Real Men Wear Uniforms: Photomontage, Postcards, and Military Visual Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Germany’, *Contemporaneity: Historical Presence in Visual Culture* 2.1 (2012), p.29.

<sup>45</sup> Tynan, ‘Unmilitary Appearance’, pp.27-8.

represent the historical connection between the Volunteers and the rebels of the past which, as the last chapter demonstrated, had become integral to republican culture and self-image. Todd Andrews described Eoin MacNeill in the Volunteer uniform in 1916 as the 'reincarnation of the glamorous army of 1779'.<sup>46</sup> Such was the legitimising and glamorising function of military uniforms that a commandant of another nationalist militia of the period, the short-lived Hibernian Rifles, believed that his own organisation's decline was due to the Volunteers being 'more attractive as they had uniforms'.<sup>47</sup> The glamour and 'romantic aura' of young men in Volunteer uniform was also not lost on Irish women, republican or otherwise, and Lucy McDiarmid has noted the perceived 'sexual charm' of the uniformed Volunteer.<sup>48</sup> More broadly, uniforms evoked credibility and all the positive attributes associated with militarism in the early twentieth century, including heroism, adventure and camaraderie. Ireland from 1914 was abound with images of uniformed First World War soldiers and the Volunteer uniform was intended to project the image that they too were a national army engaged in a noble fight against a foreign enemy. Later, during the War of Independence, military success became more important than the aesthetics of credibility and, in order to evade recognition, active guerrillas often eschewed a full Volunteer uniform in favour of an amalgamation of civilian clothing and military accessories. Gavin Foster has described the typical flying column ensemble as 'a dark jacket, a collared shirt, riding breeches, leather gaiters and

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<sup>46</sup> C. S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1979), p.85.

<sup>47</sup> BMH WS 318, John Scollan quoted in McGarry, *The Rising*, p.64.

<sup>48</sup> L. McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916* (Dublin, 2015), pp.77-8; Gavin Foster has noted that with their 'trench coats, caps pulled over the eyes, cigarettes and "Tommy guns", the attire of guerrilla soldiers had a 'hint of the 1920s gunman style that would influence early cinematic representations of "gangster chic"' (*The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class and Conflict* (Basingstoke, 2015), p.96).

boots, a Sam Browne belt, bandolier, belted trench coat, and soft cloth cap'.<sup>49</sup> Figure Four depicts a group of Volunteers wearing such outfits in a posed photograph, and the assortment of headgear – not just 'soft cloth caps' – on display indicates the relative flexibility of the sanctioned IRA appearance. The nature and meaning of Volunteer attire changed again during the Civil War when Ireland did have its own official, uniformed



Figure 5: NLI NPA DOCE5, 'A Flying Column' (undated).

national army. The IRA 'look' lost credibility as it was no longer posed against that of the reviled Black and Tans and Auxiliaries but against the Free State army uniform and the suits, and sometimes top hats, of the men in the new Dáil and Seanad Éireann.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, pp.94-5; Though they were generally kept private during the revolution itself, the composition of photographs like these 'echoed' the staged photographs of British army forces during the First World War (J. Borgonovo, "Army Without Banners": the Irish Republican Army, 1920-1921' in J. Borgonovo, J. Crowley, D. O Drisceoil and M. Murphy (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (New York, 2018), p.399).

<sup>50</sup> See G. M. Foster, *The Irish Civil War of Society: Politics, Class and Conflict* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp.102-113. Foster's chapter 'Social and Political Meanings of Clothing Pre- to Post-Revolution' includes an interesting analysis of sartorial choices in the Civil War and how they related to wider ideas of class and respectability amongst the pro and anti-Treaty forces.

A belief in the sanctity of uniform and appearance was not only held amongst leaders with an eye for propaganda. In their retrospective accounts, many former Volunteers of varying rank testified to the value of uniforms, their keenness to acquire them, and the pride in wearing them during their early years of service. J.J. Walsh recalled wearing the 'first Volunteer uniform' during an inspection in West Cork in 1914 which caused 'something of a sensation'.<sup>51</sup> Once both official and makeshift uniforms had become more commonplace, they were highly valued amongst those who wore them. At Frongoch internment camp after the Easter Rising, the rebels with uniforms were commanded to give them up in favour of civilian clothing. It had been 'a matter of pride' for the men to 'display [themselves] in uniform at all times' so many chose to hide their military attire rather than surrender it.<sup>52</sup> Uniforms were the surest representation of the Volunteer forces as a legitimate army, and were valued and treasured accordingly. Whilst many active guerrillas in the War of Independence switched to civilian clothing worn alongside useful military accessories like the bandolier, Thomas Ryan of the Tipperary Brigade apparently wore his uniform at all times throughout the conflict despite the fact that 'to be caught in uniform, of course, meant certain death'.<sup>53</sup> He acknowledged that there was 'a certain amount of bravado in wearing uniform during this period' but he and his comrade deemed it necessary in order to 'assert [their] rights as soldiers and as lawful belligerents'.<sup>54</sup> The wearing of uniform had become an essential element of their martial identity but had also become part of their civilian identity, so was regularly worn outside of military service. Roy Foster has noted that many Volunteer officers wore their uniforms 'on every possible occasion', including Terence MacSwiney for whom it became

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<sup>51</sup> Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society*, pp.94-5; BMH WS 91, J.J. Walsh, p.3.

<sup>52</sup> BMH WS 1043, Joseph Lawless, p.183.

<sup>53</sup> BMH WS 783, Thomas Ryan, pp.105-6.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

such ‘a central part of his revolutionary identity’ that he wore it on his wedding day.<sup>55</sup> The formality of the uniform conveyed respectability and honour regardless of the context in which it was worn, so became the outfit of choice for Volunteers hoping to make an impression in their personal lives. Liam Tannam of the Dublin Brigade recalled, on Easter Saturday 1916, changing into his uniform ‘for swank’ to meet his ‘girl’.<sup>56</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* had, in fact, implored its readers in 1914 to come to drills ‘as if you are going to see your best girl, clean shaven and with a haircut’.<sup>57</sup> Ernie O’Malley heeded this instruction, dressing for drills as if he were ‘going to a party or to meet [his] girl’.<sup>58</sup> Meeting girls and drilling were both occasions that required an attractive, respectable and manly appearance and so became conflated in the Volunteer imagination as moments, in Tannam’s words, ‘for swank’.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the quotes from *The Irish Volunteer* and O’Malley demonstrate that when it came to drilling and marching, the uniform alone was not enough. These were spectacles that announced the collective power and manliness of the Volunteers, so recruits were implored and impelled to make an effort with their overall appearance and to adorn themselves with all that they could in order to generate the impression of respectability, discipline and credibility.

In the Volunteering enterprise before 1916, the way that men looked could be almost as important as what men actually did. During the subsequent periods of armed conflict however, military victory became more important than respectable aesthetics. This is not to say that Volunteers on active service had no regard for their appearances – in Dan Breen’s Volunteer unit, the men apparently kept high standards of ‘personal cleanliness’ and ‘a columnman with a dirty or unshaven face was unheard of’ – but rather

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<sup>55</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.186, 210.

<sup>56</sup> BMH WS 242, Liam Tannam, p.9.

<sup>57</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.1 no.26 (1 August 1914), p.15.

<sup>58</sup> E. O’Malley, *On Another Man’s Wound* (Dublin, 1936), p.58.

<sup>59</sup> BMH WS 242, Liam Tannam, p.9.



that looking the part took a back seat in favour of acting the part and the two were often incompatible.<sup>60</sup> As will be elaborated later in the next section, ideals of masculine appearance amongst the IRA could in fact be turned on their head as visible signs of wear and tear came to represent suffering, endurance and devotion to the cause.

### Bodily endurance

The archetypal republican masculine appearance of the revolutionary period may have been that of the muscular, physically fit, uniformed and armed young man, but bodies that were emaciated through hunger strike, wounded through battle or simply dishevelled through hard work were also taken as emblems of manliness. The man who endured and suffered for the cause, and whose body displayed that suffering, could represent republican martial masculinity just as much as the muscular warrior figure. Irish republicanism was marked by an idealisation of sacrifice and it was the young men of the nation who were given the role of carrying out that sacrifice. It is unsurprising, then, that bodies onto which a narrative of toil and suffering could be written came to be celebrated for the manliness they were deemed to represent. The act of suffering for the cause, and the body that bore markers of that suffering, each displayed an individual's manly republican credentials.

The figure of the wounded soldier, both real and imagined, was a common feature in European societies in the first half of the twentieth century. Fiona Reid has explored the idealisation of wounded British soldiers in the First World War who were often, but certainly not always, characterised as 'exemplars of successful masculinity'.<sup>61</sup> The

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<sup>60</sup> D. Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin, 1924), p.177.

<sup>61</sup> F. Reid, "My Friends Looked at Me in Horror": Idealisations of Wounded Men in the First World War', *Peace and Change* 41.1 (2016), p.67; Reid's focus is on idealisation of wounded soldiers during the conflict itself but many disabled and wounded veterans became marginalised and received negligent treatment after the war. See, for example, D. Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany*,

wounded could be depicted as 'handsome, war-hardened heroes' or as 'cheery chaps' noted for their good humour in the face of adversity.<sup>62</sup> Both of these archetypes existed and overlapped in depictions of wounded Irish republican soldiers. Those who had suffered for the cause were celebrated for their courage as well as for maintaining humour and light-heartedness in the face of pain and hardship. James Connolly was severely wounded during the Easter Rising and later had to be carried to his execution on a stretcher, then tied to a chair to face the firing squad.<sup>63</sup> Descriptions of Connolly's last days encapsulate both the hardened hero and the cheery chap persona. Joe Good, for example, described in his memoir how it was 'the courage of Connolly, more than any other leader, which held the men together' in the last days in the GPO, and also that Connolly was 'joking and laughing' on those days despite his wounds.<sup>64</sup> Joseph Plunkett, meanwhile, was terminally ill, and visibly so, during the Rising: William Brennan-Whitmore wrote of the moment he first saw Plunkett when collecting him from his nursing home on Easter Monday morning, 'if ever death had laid its mark openly on a man, it was here'.<sup>65</sup> Descriptions of Plunkett's role in the rebellion again tell a story of good humour and stoicism despite his frailty and pain. Desmond Fitzgerald, for example, wrote that his friend looked 'appallingly ill but at the same time very cheerful'.<sup>66</sup> Other accounts tell of the active and reassuring role that Plunkett took despite his health, remaining in the thick of it, sporting a 'bizarre, eccentric appearance', brandishing a

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1914-1939 (Berkeley, 2001), pp.101-148. The treatment of Irish disabled veterans of the First World War has also been the subject of research. See M. 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* 25.3 (2017), pp.316-335.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, pp.67-9.

<sup>63</sup> McGarry, *The Rising*, p.276.

<sup>64</sup> Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, p.44, 50.

<sup>65</sup> W. Brennan-Whitmore quoted in R. Dudley Edwards, *The Seven: The Lives and Legacies of the Founding Fathers of the Irish Republic* (London, 2016), p.310.

<sup>66</sup> D. Fitzgerald quoted in Dudley Edwards, *The Seven*, p.317.

sabre, boosting morale and imploring his men not to be afraid.<sup>67</sup> Both courage and good humour in the face of suffering fitted with republican notions of noble sacrifice and the belief that a true Irishman would happily endure hardship for the higher cause of the nation. Expressions of stoicism and perseverance in the face of suffering were a relatively straightforward and replicable performance of manliness, and in a hospital autograph book produced after the Easter Rising a man named Michael O'Doherty wrote simply: 'Wounded on left cheek, head, lost right eye, four wounds in right arm, I only can sign this with left hand. Ready for another fight whenever I am wanted'.<sup>68</sup> His words are performative, succinctly declaring the extent to which he had suffered for the cause alongside his enduring commitment and readiness to further sacrifice himself for its fulfilment in order to display his manly credentials to the reader.

Aside from the serious wounds inflicted by first-hand military engagement, the conditions of Easter week 1916 and the protracted guerrilla warfare from 1919 onwards took their toll on men's health. Seamus Babington asserted in retrospect that it had been fortunate that he and comrades were all young men, because otherwise they may not have 'stood the strain of working for a living in the day time and spending five nights a week on IRA duty'.<sup>69</sup> Jim O'Donnell, meanwhile, described the 'boils, eczema and other skin diseases' suffered by the IRA on account of 'the hardship they endured and exposure to the elements'.<sup>70</sup> According to Seán Moylan, IRA training 'in the years that preceded the real clash of arms' had also been 'strenuous and trying', having included continuous

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<sup>67</sup> Dudley Edwards, *The Seven*, p.310, 322; Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, p.49.

<sup>68</sup> Michael O'Doherty entry in Dublin Castle Hospital autograph book (1916), available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/book-pages/dublin-castle-hospital-june-1916-page-32/>.

<sup>69</sup> BMH WS 1595, Seamus Babington, p.40.

<sup>70</sup> NLI MS 44,046/2, J. O'Donnell, *Recollection based on the Diary of an Irish Volunteer 1898 to 1924* (1972); Others experienced what became known as the 'republican itch' as they became covered in lice due to poor hygiene whilst on the run (Foster, *Civil War and Society*, p.101).

marching, drilling and 'long distance cycling on bad roads in all weathers'.<sup>71</sup> The physical exertion that came with being an active Volunteer, and the wear and tear inflicted on their bodies as a result, is not, however, as widely discussed in accounts of the period as one might expect. Perhaps this is because it could be read as a complaint and would therefore detract from the narrative of heroic fortitude and coolness. On the other hand, such descriptions illustrate the extent of everyday suffering and can be read as performances of enduring manliness: to maintain coolness and commitment despite pain, discomfort and exhaustion was what qualified men as noble soldiers and revolutionaries. There was, therefore, a balance to be struck between describing the extent of one's suffering and appearing to grieve. Bodily fortitude could of course stem from an earnest commitment to the cause but it could also involve an element of conscious performance. Ernie O'Malley observed that amongst his peers,

Wettings went unnoticed, umbrellas were not carried; even in the towns they would be thought unmanly. Galoshes or light overshoes were a genteel monopoly. Lack of general regard for health and personal comfort had become close to affectation with us; it was a sign of manliness.<sup>72</sup>

To shun concerns of comfort, health and appearances had become part of their martial masculine identities. That identity was displayed through their dishevelled bodies, and physical signs of endurance became almost desirable as markers of military status. This is a direct contrast with the desired appearance, discussed earlier, of neatness and attractiveness amongst Volunteer during training in the years and months before the Easter Rising. Once the organisation was engaged in active warfare, a rank and file Volunteer's tidy and kempt appearance was no longer a symbol of commitment and

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<sup>71</sup> Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p.18.

<sup>72</sup> O'Malley, *Another Man's Wound*, p.136.

effort.<sup>73</sup> Instead, it could represent shirking and therefore a lack of resolve. The sacrificial ideal combined with ideals of endurance to produce an environment where concern for one's personal health, hygiene or comfort could be read as an insufficient dedication to the cause and therefore as, in O'Malley's words, 'unmanly'.

Correspondingly, the 'grubby beards', 'tattered clothing' and the weary and sometimes wounded bodies of those imprisoned after the Easter Rising were taken as indications of the manly work they had done for Ireland during the rebellion.<sup>74</sup> Robert Brennan recalled that when he and his Wexford comrades were initially held at Richmond Barracks following the surrender, a man entered who 'knew no one and no one knew him'.<sup>75</sup> His boots were 'newly polished' and so it was presumed he could not have taken part in the Rising and must be a spy. As a result, he was avoided by the other men. Brennan felt this to be unfair so went to speak to the man and found that he was a Dublin Sinn Féiner named Joe Mooney who knew many leading republicans. Thereafter, he and Brennan became 'great friends'.<sup>76</sup> In the days of training and drilling before 1916, an unkempt appearance would arouse suspicion of inauthenticity but after military engagement the opposite became true so Mooney's clean boots were scrutinised. This testifies to the different meanings that could be written onto men's appearances in different contexts. The signifiers of manliness and of status within the group changed as the situation demanded. The tidy and untidy masculine figure signified the two key

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<sup>73</sup> It was a different story for men in positions of leadership, who were expected to look appropriately smart. Kevin O'Shiel wrote the following about Michael Collins in his witness statement: 'I would particularly like to emphasise the remarkable neatness and orderliness of his attire and general appearance. You never saw him turn out untidily or slovenly in any respect; always spick-and-span; and, on the other hand, never ostentatious or exhibitionist. Mick was far, far removed from the modern 'Teddy boy' with effeminate beard and outlandish garb' (WS 1770, p.720). It is notable that O'Shiel chose to affirm even in retrospect that Collins's neatness did not denote exhibitionism nor femininity, thereby clarifying that his care for his appearance should not be taken as a slight on his masculinity.

<sup>74</sup> BMH WS 1043, Joseph Lawless, p.163.

<sup>75</sup> R. Brennan, *Allegiance* (Dublin, 1950), p.80.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

aspects of manliness: an orderly and neat appearance denoted discipline and respectability, and a wounded or dishevelled appearance denoted courage and action. Both could be considered manly in the right context, for performances and appearances of manliness were not static but adapted to the varying circumstances in which they were enacted.

### The hunger striking body

It was the hunger striking body that perhaps appeared in starkest contrast to the idealised strong, muscular soldierly body.<sup>77</sup> It was weak, dependent and inactive. Yet, the emaciated figure of the hunger striker has become a symbol of Irish republican masculinity.<sup>78</sup> It was, however, the hunger strikes of suffragette women from 1909 to 1914 that inspired this method of political action and provided the prism through which the republican strikes were understood.<sup>79</sup> As Jack Elliott has illustrated, the participants and supporters of each cause used different gendered language to frame their actions: whilst the suffragettes 'were keen to capitalise on the image of passive females violated

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<sup>77</sup> Between 1913 and 1922, 1000 individual men were involved in a hunger strike at one point or another, and then in October 1923 republican prisoners engaged in a mass hunger strike involving 8000 men across multiple prisons (G. Sweeney, 'Self-Immolative Martyrdom: Explaining the Irish Hunger Strike Tradition', *An Irish Quarterly Review* 93 (2004), p.339).

<sup>78</sup> Irish republican women also went on hunger strikes during the Civil War. Most notable is Mary MacSwiney's 1922 hunger strike at Mountjoy prison which lasted 24 days before she was released due to her critical condition (S. McCool, *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900-1923* (Dublin, 2004), pp.95-6, 101); James Vernon has noted the nexus of masculinity, Catholicism and ancient Irish legal practice that underpinned the tradition of Irish republican hunger strike: they were 'increasingly associated not only with masculine strength and endurance but with a specifically Catholic sense of the purity and redemptive power of abstinence and sacrifice' and subsequently 'an older Irish Celtic tradition was found for the republican hunger strike, one that stretched back to the ancient custom of *Senchus Mor*, according to which a victim of debt or injustice could fast on the threshold of the house of those who wronged him, until a settlement was reached, and its practice by Saint Patrick' (*Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, 2007), p.25).

<sup>79</sup> British, Irish and American suffragettes engaged in hunger strikes. Mary Leigh was one of a group to go on hunger strike at Dublin's Mountjoy Jail in 1912 and told the governor, 'You can kill me if you like, and I will gladly die, but I won't give in' (quoted in W. Murphy, 'Dying, Death and Hunger Strike: Cork and Brixton, 1920' in J. Kelly and M. A. Lyons (eds.), *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives* (Kildare, 2013), p.300).

by a threatening male state apparatus', Irish republicans circumvented this 'feminised language of passivity' by using a 'masculinised discourse of endurance'.<sup>80</sup> Much later in the twentieth century, the republican hunger strikes of the Northern Irish Troubles were similarly conceived in masculine terms, and some of the extensive scholarship on the strikes has focused on their gendered and bodily aspects.<sup>81</sup> Megan O'Branski, for example, has argued that the 1981 prison hunger strikers successfully weaponised their bodies in order to reclaim and assert their masculinity in the face of degrading and feminising abuse at the hands of prison officers.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, hunger striking allows an individual to gain power in an otherwise powerless position. It produces an emotive response, providing an alternative means by which young militants can use their bodies to benefit the cause. A Volunteer's sacrifice was considered righteous whether it was achieved on the battlefield, in front of the firing squad or in the hospital bed but hunger striking was the most enduring and visible form of republican suffering and sacrifice. Those who took part were engaged in a performance of fortitude despite bodily decimation, whilst that decimation itself acted as a physical representation of their dedication to the cause and the cruelty of their British oppressors. By far the most prominent Irish hunger striker of the revolutionary period was Terence MacSwiney, who died after 79 days of hunger strike in Brixton prison in 1920. MacSwiney was described during and after his hunger strike in a way that emphasised both his hardiness and courageous, and his good humoured and calm nature. He apparently maintained 'calm and nonchalance' alongside

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<sup>80</sup> Elliott, *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity*, p.247.

<sup>81</sup> C. Yuill, 'The Body as Weapon: Bobby Sands and the Republican Hunger Strikes', *Sociological Research Online* 12.2 (2007), pp.1-11; A. Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago, 1991); B. Campbell, L. McKeown, F. O'Hagan (eds.), *Nor meekly serve my time: the H-block struggle 1976-1981* (Belfast, 1998); D. Morrison, *Hunger Strike: Reflections on the 1981 Republican Hunger Strike* (Dingle, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> M.A. O'Branski, "'The Savage Reduction of the Flesh": Violence, Gender and Bodily Weaponisation in the 1981 Irish Republican Hunger Strike Protest', *Critical Studies of Terrorism* 7.1 (2014), pp.97-111.

‘unflinching perseverance’.<sup>83</sup> The nature of his death and the manner in which he confronted it were presented as no less soldierly than that of his comrades who died with gun in hand. Writing to MacSwiney’s family after his death in 1920, Diarmuid Lynch stated that the ‘valiant struggle’ of he and his striking comrades outshone ‘the greatest deeds of any soldiers that ever faced certain death and annihilation on the battlefield’.<sup>84</sup>

P.S. O’Hegarty, meanwhile, wrote the following about seeing MacSwiney’s dead body:

The lines were different for it was a face in which all the tissue had gone, in which everything had gone but the fundamentals. It was a face, in fact, in which the real Terry, the fundamental Terry, first appeared. And what was left now was essentially a warrior face. Nobody had been accustomed to regard Terry as primarily a fighter...And yet that was what death revealed, that this man was fundamentally a warrior, a warrior of the highest caste known to mankind. As one looked at the face, stern and set, one’s mind instinctively leaped to the word “Samurai.” It was his type. Unflinching courage, unflinching resolution, unflinching self-sacrifice on the altar of duty. That was Terry.<sup>85</sup>

This was, of course, written for literary impact but is interesting nonetheless as an indication of the esteem in which hunger strikers were held.<sup>86</sup> The extent to which they

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<sup>83</sup> C. Harrington, ‘Arrest and Martyrdom of Terence MacSwiney’ in B. Ó Conchubhair, *Rebel Cork’s Fighting Story 1916-21: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.65.

<sup>84</sup> NLI MS 8446/20, Typescript copy of telegram of condolence to the MacSwiney family from Diarmuid Lynch (1920).

<sup>85</sup> O’Hegarty, *Short Memoir*, p.97; The body of Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa had been depicted in a similar way in 1915 and the souvenir booklet from his funeral proclaimed that ‘he lay like a warrior taking his rest’ (NLI MS 13,174/12/1 Souvenir Booklet for Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s funeral at Glasnevin Cemetery (1 August 1915), p.27); MacSwiney was joined in his hunger strike by comrades in Cork jail, two of whom also died and were similarly ‘decorated with manly, martial adjectives and phrases’: for example, Michael Fitzgerald was described in the *Irish Independent* as possessing ‘extraordinary courage and fortitude’ and as ‘a man of brave and robust physique’ who had ‘battled bravely’ (Murphy, ‘Dying, Death and Hunger Strike’, p.312-3).

<sup>86</sup> In the wider spectrum of Irish nationalism, there existed plenty of scepticism about the morality of hunger striking due to its suicidal nature. As William Murphy has illustrated, ‘extensive contemporary debates on the morality of hunger strikes took place in theological and clerical journals, in the press, and beyond’ and ‘although many Catholic churches facilitated masses and vigils for the strikers, this was not always so’. Murphy suggests that the uncertainty expressed by Rosamund Jacob in her diary ‘probably reflected the private thoughts of many Irish nationalists’: ‘I can hardly think of anything braver that was ever done, but I’m not sure about the rightness of hunger strikes’ (‘Dying, Death and Hunger Strike’,





Figure 6: NLI NPA POLF191, *Body of Terence MacSwiney (1920)*.

O'Hegarty's words attest, MacSwiney's emaciated appearance in death generated a particularly emotive response but the act of observing the face and body of the deceased was an important and poignant act of commemoration at all republican funerals regardless of how the man had died.<sup>87</sup> Their martyr status was consecrated as the public and Volunteers alike filed past the bier, and the corporeal figure that had suffered and paid the ultimate sacrifice for the cause became an emblematic representation of true

suffered, and suffered with fortitude, for the love of the republican cause consecrated their status as 'warriors' and models of sacrificial heroism. Extreme bodily endurance acted as a highly visible performance of republican masculinity and the devastated body of a hunger striker, though it was diametrically opposed to the typical ideal of soldierly appearance, became a powerful symbol of martial manliness. As

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pp.309-10); Republican critics of hunger strikes existed in the prisons themselves too: when all the republicans at Mountjoy Jail in 1917 went on hunger strike, Richard Ó Cólman was the only man not to take part because he 'thought it was a suicidal move and in conscience did not agree with it' (BMH WS 1474, Éamon O'Duibhir, p.17).

<sup>87</sup> Elliott, *Commemorating Advanced Nationalist Identity*, p.20, 111; K. Verdery, 'Dead Bodies Animate the Study of Politics' in A.C.G.M Robben (ed.), *Death, Mourning and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (Oxford, 2004), p.305; A. Hepburn, 'The Irish Way of Dying: "Ulysses" and Funeral Processions', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 38 (2014), p.199.

Irish masculinity. As well as emphasising the manliness of hunger strikers, republican propagandists were keen to stress their piety by sharing descriptions of the Catholic rituals that surrounded their demise. For example, the religious ritual involving four priests and four nuns that occurred around the death of Michael Fitzgerald at Cork Jail in 1920 was described in detail in the press, whilst Terence MacSwiney's final moments, recorded in many newspapers, 'constituted an unmistakable version of the good Christian death'.<sup>88</sup> By projecting an image of the hunger strikers as 'men of deep faith' and constructing their strikes as a 'quasi-religious act', propagandists could affirm the righteousness of the striker's martyrdom and simultaneously deflect any religious criticism of their suicide.<sup>89</sup>

In the rhetoric and imagery of republicanism, fighting bodies and suffering bodies were both manly and both powerful: one primarily for its muscularity and bellicosity and the other primarily for its fortitude and endurance. There is, of course, significant overlap here and fighting and suffering were far from mutually exclusive: an individual man could experience and achieve both during his Volunteering service. Ernie O'Malley, for instance, was a well-known and accomplished fighter but he also faced torture at the hands of Auxiliaries in the War of Independence and severe wounding in the Civil War which left 'a legacy of constant physical pain'.<sup>90</sup> Fighting and suffering were both taken as acts of true Irishmen, but the key difference between the two forms of martial masculine performance was in their physical appearance. In a culture that valued endurance and

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<sup>88</sup> Murphy, 'Dying, Death and Hunger Strike', pp.308-313.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> R. English, *Ernie O'Malley: IRA Intellectual* (Oxford, 1998), p178.

sacrifice, the emaciated body could be valorised for its manliness just as much as the muscular and handsome.

### The 'strenuous life' and Volunteer imprisonment

The idealisation of physical manifestations of suffering in a man's appearance stemmed from a broader belief held amongst republicans that to suffer and endure was, in essence, righteous. Michael Collins was a proponent of this idea, evidenced in a quote from Theodore Roosevelt that he kept on a bronze plaque above the mantelpiece in his office:

I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but that of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labour and strife. To preach that higher form of success that comes, not to the men who desires mere ease and peace, but to him who does not strike from danger, hardship or bitter toil, and who, out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph.<sup>91</sup>

Roosevelt's words are in keeping with republican doctrine which advocated that endurance and toil were noble, honourable and valuable. According to Ernie O'Malley, one did not judge a Volunteer on his background and 'position' but by his 'ability', 'selflessness', 'grit', 'determination', 'capacity for suffering', 'courage' and 'readiness to work'.<sup>92</sup> These were all traits that had to be enacted and displayed in order for a man to show his worth. The inclusion of 'capacity for suffering' in O'Malley's list of desirable traits indicates that suffering was conceived as something one *did*, not something of which one was a passive victim. Some men would not cope with the suffering that came with the Volunteer role, but true Irishmen would withstand it with good humour and

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<sup>91</sup> NLI MS 46,687/4, E. Dalton, 'An Appreciation of Michael Collins' [undated].

<sup>92</sup> E. O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin, 1978), p.12.

fortitude. To endure hardship for the nation was denoted as the duty of a true Irishman, and *An tÓglách* asserted that,

...the Republic has a right to demand the services of the young men of Ireland in defence of their lawfully constituted Government. Young men who, through apathy, timidity or from selfish motives remain outside the ranks should be shamed into 'doing their bit'. At a time when young men are facing prison and death, and many have shed their blood fighting for the Republic, the other men who cheer their exploits but keep themselves safely out of the firing line should be made to feel themselves the selfish 'slackers' they are.<sup>93</sup>

As this quote attests, incarceration was an important and visible means by which Volunteers endured and suffered for the cause. The fact they had been arrested in the first place combined with the hardship endured in the prison or internment camp was taken as proof of their commitment and courage. Accordingly, imprisoned Volunteers were held in high regard and received great acclaim. Peter Hart has described prisons in the revolutionary period as a 'stage' on which Volunteers could 'act out their parts to a mass Irish audience' whilst William Murphy described them as a 'pulpit' or 'soapbox'.<sup>94</sup> Imprisoned Volunteers were ennobled and anointed as 'the men who risked all for their country' and achieved 'name recognition, ideological authenticity, and instant political credibility' as a result.<sup>95</sup> The entire revolutionary period provided a stage for Volunteer performances of martial manliness, but the prison was indeed one of the clearest and simplest arenas in which to enact it. A republican who was imprisoned for his

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<sup>93</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.14 (1 July 1920), p.1.

<sup>94</sup> P. Hart, *Mick: The Real Michael Collins* (London, 2006), p.100; W. Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish, 1912-1921* (Oxford, 2014), p.9.

<sup>95</sup> Hart, *Mick*, p.100.

revolutionary endeavours and maintained good spirits during his incarceration was deemed, by nature, to be a true Irishman.

Patriotic prisoners had long been venerated within advanced nationalist culture, and jailed Volunteers were readily aligned with esteemed republican prisoners of the past from Theobald Wolfe Tone to John Mitchel to Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa.<sup>96</sup> The Defence of the Realm Act in 1914 and the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act 1920 enabled the authorities to arrest and intern without trial but even using ordinary peacetime laws, Volunteers could be imprisoned for 'minor transgressions' and still become 'local heroes'.<sup>97</sup> Unsurprisingly, imprisonment became an almost attractive prospect for those hoping to cement their status within the organisation: it was a clear route to prestige and a platform for the performance of courageous and sacrificial manliness. Sinn Féiner Louis J. Walsh's account of his 1920 arrest and imprisonment are marked by the excitement, satisfaction and pride they generated. Writing the following year, he expressed his joy at being counted amongst the rebels of Irish history:

I had joined - even poor, insignificant, selfish me! - the long line of those who had worked and suffered for Ireland; and from the warm handclasp of every rough, manly hand, and the fervent "God and His Blessed Mother protect you!" that the women spoke, I knew that, all unworthy though I was, I was identified in these people's eyes with the men of '98, and '48 and '67 and '16, who had written their names in letters of gold on the dark pages of Ireland's history.<sup>98</sup>

He was, moreover, 'grateful' to the police officer that handcuffed him as he was transported to Ballykinlar internment camp for he had allowed him to experience the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid; Murphy, *Political Imprisonment*, p.42.

<sup>97</sup> J. Augusteijn, 'Military Conflict in the War of Independence' 1921' in J. Borghonovo, J. Crowley, D. O Drisceoil and M. Murphy (eds.), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (New York, 2018), p.348.

<sup>98</sup> L.J. Walsh, *"On My Keeping" And In Theirs: A Record of Experiences "On The Run" In Derry Gaol, And In Ballykinlar Internment Camp* (Dublin, 1921), p.3.

'feeling' of being handcuffed which in turn would enable him to 'thrill' his future grandchildren with the story.<sup>99</sup> As a political rather than a military man, it was perhaps less of a taboo for Walsh to admit the personal gratification that his arrest generated. Volunteers, on the other hand, were reminded that any 'self-satisfaction' was a 'dangerous frame of mind' and were expected to think only in terms of how they could best help the cause.<sup>100</sup> Dan Breen was indeed disdainful of those who 'allowed' themselves to get arrested for their republican exploits because imprisonment was considered 'the height of patriotism' after the Easter Rising.<sup>101</sup> He lamented that such men were more concerned with 'becoming cheap heroes' than 'putting the arms to good use'.<sup>102</sup> This points to a wider disdain from men like Breen, an infamous guerrilla fighter, for those they deemed to be shirking and favouring a spell in the limelight over any real hard work or risk-taking. As the continual references made to real, true and genuine Irishman in republican discourses across the revolutionary period indicate, authenticity mattered. Those who were perceived to have joined the Volunteers to enjoy 'reflected glory' and hero-worship without 'bestirring themselves' to real selfless action were deemed inauthentic and a blight on the organisation's curated appearance of modesty, altruism and nobility.<sup>103</sup>

Mass imprisonment of Volunteers may have been strategically problematic because it took valuable soldiers out of play, but it was also propagandistically beneficial for it signalled that the organisation had been deemed a legitimate threat in need of containment. There was, for instance, a 'perverse kind of pride' in the 'military captivity'

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p.43.

<sup>100</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.7 (15 March 1920), p.1.

<sup>101</sup> D. Breen, *My Fight For Irish Freedom* (Dublin, 1924), p.56.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.7 (15 March 1920), p.1.

of Volunteers after the Easter Rising for it showed ‘they were indeed an army’.<sup>104</sup> To maximise that impression, the imprisoned men campaigned for Prisoner of War status for, in the words of Harry Boland, they had ‘fought a clean, fair fight, and should be treated as honourable men, not criminals’.<sup>105</sup> To maintain that they were not just any army but a particularly honourable and manful one, the display of good humour and fortitude during their captivity became essential. These attributes were often grouped together under the term ‘spirit’, and it was proclaimed in *An tÓglách* in 1919 that incarcerated Volunteers had behaved like ‘true soldiers’ by facing ‘the torture and brutalities of the enemy with an unflinching spirit’.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, during his solitary confinement whilst imprisoned in the Civil War, the IRA’s James O’Donovan affirmed that to show an amiable perseverance whilst in prison was cause for commendation: he wrote that ‘punishment accepted with ill grace’ was ‘harmful’ but ‘whether justly or unjustly afflicted, punishment borne with equanimity and a good grace can be a fruitful source of merit’.<sup>107</sup> Simply being arrested accorded status to a Volunteer, but to achieve true acclaim they had to perform the sanctioned ideals of resolution and affability during their imprisonment.<sup>108</sup>

The display of stoicism whilst suffering also worked to demonstrate personal and collective strength and resolution in front of the enemy. When Ernie O’Malley was captured whilst wounded and placed in a Free State hospital in 1922, he ‘had to bite hard on [his] wounds’ for he ‘was in enemy hands and that meant no giving in to pain and no sense of complaint’.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, enduring stoically through physical and mental hardship

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<sup>104</sup> Hart, *Mick*, p.99.

<sup>105</sup> NLI MS 13070/3/1, Leaflet regarding a strike by prisoners in Lewes Jail (1917).

<sup>106</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I no.10 (1 February 1919).

<sup>107</sup> NLI MS 22,306, James L. O’Donovan, ‘From Out My Arboury (Jottings in Solitary Confinement in Arbour Hill)’ (September 22, 1923).

<sup>108</sup> See Chapter Five for more on the pressures to be uncomplaining, unified and fortitudinous in prisons and internment camps.

<sup>109</sup> O’Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.191.

was a display of masculinity for multiple audiences and for multiple functions.<sup>110</sup> To show unyielding fortitude when in enemy hands is a trope of the soldierly experience, found across individual heroic war stories and in military fiction. Such performances are, however, just as much about maintaining status and approval amongst one's own army as they are about showing resistance and power to the enemy. To remain calm, genial and tough during hardship was a requisite for the martial manly role. Seán Prendergast's description of the comportment of anti-Treaty IRA men during their two-month long occupation of the Four Courts in 1922 encapsulate the ideal performance of endurance:

...the men showed gameness for anything. Not one word of complaint, not a murmur of despair or sign of despondency was expressed or implied...they responded in the highest spirit to every demand made on them, regardless of their own comfort or their own wellbeing...One thing was never absent, their deep sense of humour...During all that time our men behaved wonderfully cool, collected and determined, showing neither sign of hysteria or fuss, all under perfect control.<sup>111</sup>

Though he is referring to a specific moment in the Civil War, the behaviours and characteristics that Prendergast describes were eulogised across the revolutionary period. Volunteers became well-versed in the approved and applauded comportment of a man facing physical or mental hardship and performed their roles accordingly.

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<sup>110</sup> These audiences could, of course, be present at the same time. For Richard Mulcahy, being in the presence of both his Commander-in-Chief and in the hands of British forces after the Easter Rising was a moment that required him to be 'nothing but the most perfect soldier' (*Recollections of Easter Week* quoted in M.G. Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the Founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992), p.1).

<sup>111</sup> BMH WS 802, Seán Prendergast, p.11, 14, 27.



Maintaining that role and the status that came with it became a matter of personal pride and honour.

### Masculine pride

Dignity, honour and pride are tightly enmeshed in conceptions and experiences of manliness, because manliness is about status. These facets of the masculine role and identity are heightened in the military sphere, and particularly in armies fighting for independence and their rights 'as men'. Performances of manliness amongst the Irish Volunteers were, therefore, enacted in part to maintain pride. On an individual level, a performance that combined discipline, courage and stoicism maintained a soldier's standing amongst his peers and superiors as well as generating a personal sense of gratification. On a collective level, such performances maintained the integrity and honour of the IRA and the republican project at large. The republican cause had always been infused with notions of masculine pride: the experience of subordination to a larger power severely dented men's pride, so the independence struggle was regularly construed as a reclamation of masculine status and honour. The definition of pride being used here relates to self-worth and self-esteem and their preservation through peer approval of performed manliness. It is about the maintenance of an individual's sense of their masculine self rather than pride in specific achievements. When the anti-Treaty IRA commanders occupying the Four Courts in 1922 were deliberating whether or not to surrender to the Free State forces outside, Joe McKelvey submitted his view that, 'at least we can feel like men if we fight our way out'.<sup>112</sup> McKelvey is exceptional in expressing this consideration explicitly but in a culture pervaded by ideals of resolute martial manliness,

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<sup>112</sup> O'Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.111.

ensuring that one felt 'like a man' and kept manly pride intact surely influenced the decision-making of many Volunteers.

The collective and the personal aspects of pride and honour came to the fore in the split over the Anglo-Irish Treaty. On the anti-Treaty side, militants as well as politicians, and men as well as women, consistently evoked honour when making the case that the IRA should keep fighting until a republic was achieved. They pointed in literal terms to the oath that Volunteers and Sinn Féiners had taken to the Republic and accused pro-Treatyites of dishonour in breaking that oath. In a more abstract sense, to compromise and backpedal from the professed goal of the republican cause constituted personal dishonour.<sup>113</sup> This uncompromising outlook which prescribed that the fight should go on until outright victory had been achieved was, unsurprisingly, particularly common amongst active guerrillas. As the last chapter illustrated, to be wholly unyielding was part of their self-image and identity. It therefore became a matter of pride and self-esteem to maintain the anti-Treaty position: to keep up the fight was the 'manly' thing to do. The split over the Treaty has often been characterised as one of principles versus pragmatism, whereby those opposed to it thought in terms of such abstractions as pride and honour whilst those in favour of it took a more practical and unsentimental approach that considered the Free State as a stepping stone to full independence.<sup>114</sup> The divide is encapsulated in the words of Seán T. O'Kelly during the Dáil debates on 20 December 1921 when he stated that, like the men of 1916, republicans must accept the 'hard' but 'honoured' path and continue to fight.<sup>115</sup> Pride mattered more to him than practicality and to keep fighting was to ensure that the honour of the IRA and of the nation remained

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<sup>113</sup> Tom Garvin has argued that the 'concern with personal honour' amongst anti-Treaty men was, interestingly, partly an imitation of 'English gentlemanly ethics' (*Nationalist Revolutionaries*, p.145).

<sup>114</sup> Townshend, *The Republic*, p.352-7.

<sup>115</sup> Seán T. O'Kelly, Dáil Éireann debate (20 December 1921).

intact.<sup>116</sup> Seán Etchingham similarly described himself as ‘republican in conviction’ in contrast to those ‘compromising opportunists’ who favoured the Treaty and were not going into the Empire with their ‘heads up’ as they claimed, but with their ‘hands up’.<sup>117</sup> He argued that to accept the settlement was to ‘give in’ and ‘surrender’ all the principles that the men of the Dáil were there to uphold and would therefore undermine the honour of the country as well as their own ‘personal honour’.<sup>118</sup> Pro-Treaty men’s honour was, of course, also important to them and these accusations of dishonour were not taken lightly. When Mary MacSwiney accused Eoin O’Duffy of having betrayed the Republic, he responded,

I would rather be shot on the spot, and would to God [sic] I were shot an hour ago, rather than this last statement should be made against me now. It is most unfair, most unjust. Such statements should not be used.<sup>119</sup>

Accusations of dishonour and betrayal were grave insults, targeting the very essence of an individual’s identity as a man and as a republican. O’Duffy’s words are an illustration of the fragility of his masculine pride and of how important his reputation was to his self-identity. His hyperbolic assertion that he would rather be shot than receive such allegations was performative, intended to reclaim the pride and honourable status MacSwiney had sought to dent.

The pride of one man, Éamon de Valera, appeared to have a tangible impact on the shape that the divide over the Anglo-Irish Treaty took. Though he was President of the Second Dáil, de Valera did not go to London during the truce of 1921 to negotiate a

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<sup>116</sup> P.S O’Hegarty, a staunch advocate of the Treaty – or perhaps more accurately, as his work often reads, staunch opponent of the anti-Treaty side – did not see pride in such positive terms, listing it amongst stubbornness, egotism and selfishness as the traits which come from the ‘devilish heart of man’ to create ‘vile’ civil wars (O’Hegarty, *Victory*, p.148, 173).

<sup>117</sup> Seán Etchingham, Dáil Éireann debate (20 December 1921).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, Dáil Éireann debate (17 December 1921).

settlement. Instead, he sent a group of plenipotentiaries to the negotiations and instructed them to refer back to Dublin before making any decisions. In the early hours of 6 December 1921, the delegates signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty without consulting the President. This became a major point of contention and arguably influenced his opposition to the Treaty. De Valera's biographer, Ronan Fanning, has contended that he opposed the terms not because it was 'a compromise but because it was not *his* compromise'.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, he drew up his own alternate settlement named Document No. 2 which was not in fact substantively different to the terms of the Treaty and similarly did not legislate for a Republic. This undermines any argument that de Valera's position was one of absolutist republicanism. Fanning has gone so far as to argue that the dimensions of, or perhaps even the fact of, the Civil War were down to one man's unwillingness to 'swallow his pride' and accept a settlement that he had not been involved in or consulted on.<sup>121</sup> It is not hard to see the role of the republican manly ideal in his petulance. Pride is, of course, not exclusive to men. It is, however, thoroughly intertwined with the basic tenets of hard-headed modern western masculinity, whereas femininity has been constructed as deferential and modest. De Valera's status as a leader had been undermined by the plenipotentiaries, and he would not allow his status as a 'true' tough and unwavering Irishman to be further undermined through compromise or capitulation. By opposing the Treaty, and adopting the persevering, unyielding position, he retained the honour and respect of the similarly uncompromising guerrilla gunmen. He also, however, allowed a personal issue to have national repercussions well beyond

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<sup>120</sup> R. Fanning, *Éamon de Valera: A Will to Power* (London, 2015), p.265.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

his own pride and status. Ideals of manliness, therefore, had a significant part to play in the course of the Civil War.

The importance of pride to decision-making was not, however, limited to the anti-Treaty side of the Civil War. Michael Collins occupied the role of Commander-in-Chief of the Free State National Army up until his death in August 1922 and the circumstances surrounding his death can be effectively read through the lens of masculine pride. As the face of the Free State, Collins had been the target of many of the IRA accusations that pro-Treaty men were pawns of the British with no conviction or courage. He was also personally marred by accusations about his lack of real military experience.<sup>122</sup> On 20 August 1922, Collins travelled to his native Cork despite the advice of his associates that it was too dangerous. Two days later he was returning from a tour of West Cork when his convoy was ambushed. His companion Emmet Dalton ordered the driver to continue on to safety, but Collins insisted on getting out of the car to face the gunmen. During the ensuing shoot-out, Collins received a shot to the head and was killed. Most analyses of the events conceive of Collins's decision to get out of the car as recklessness: Anne Dolan described the ambush as an engagement that 'the most naïve soldier would have shunned', Michael Hopkinson asserted that Collins's death could be put down to his 'devil-may-care attitude', and Peter Hart depicted it as a product of military inexperience, alcohol consumption or both.<sup>123</sup> Charles Townshend, on the other hand, takes account of the place of performance and pride in Collins's death:

Collins's death had an aspect of classical tragedy: when his convoy was fired on, there was nothing to stop the car he was travelling in from driving through to safety -

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<sup>122</sup> Cathal Brugha was Collins's most vocal critic, accusing him during the Treaty debates of having never 'fired a shot at an enemy of Ireland' and basking in undue praise based on inaccurate stories about his heroic exploits (Dáil Éireann debate (7 January 1922)).

<sup>123</sup> A. Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003), p.61; M. Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: the Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 2004) p.178; Hart, *Mick*, p.411.

nothing except perhaps his desire to demonstrate that he was truly a fighting man, not a pen-pusher...He was playing soldiers.<sup>124</sup>

Townshend hints at but does not draw out the role of manliness in Collins's actions. He does, however, note the theatricality of the event and Collins's performance of courageous soldiering that was likely intended to prove his detractors wrong. Whether or not Collins fully realised the danger of what he was doing, his pride and desire for honour appear to have eclipsed his pragmatism and the advice of more experienced companions at a critical moment. Despite the fact he had not engaged in face-to-face military action during the War of Independence, descriptions of his conduct during that conflict do suggest he was of a rather uncompromising personal demeanour, despite his willingness to compromise on the political stage in 1921. Joe Good, for instance, described Collins as the 'epitome of that individual who *must win*'.<sup>125</sup> Batt O'Connor, meanwhile, wrote of Collins that 'if it were suggested to him that he should not do a certain thing because of its dangerous nature, he would unhesitatingly start to carry it out'.<sup>126</sup> O'Connor insists that such behaviour did not stem from any 'spirit of bravado', but nonetheless it points to an impulse in Collins's character to prove himself and his courage through dangerous action.<sup>127</sup> The discourse of sacrificial masculinity that pervaded the revolutionary years is also likely to have played a role. Collins faced the same choice as many soldiers do on the battlefield: to risk death but preserve honour or save himself but endure a loss of honour.<sup>128</sup> This is not to say that his death was intentional and indeed he had expressed scepticism about the glorification of sacrifice in the past but still, he existed

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<sup>124</sup> Townshend, *The Republic*, p.432.

<sup>125</sup> Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, p.8.

<sup>126</sup> O'Connor, *With Michael Collins*, p.190.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> R. Peterson and E. Liaras, 'Countering Fear in War: The Strategic Use of Emotion', *Journal of Military Ethics* 5.4 (2006), p.321.

within a milieu where men who died in battle were regarded as heroes and that culture must have had some impact on his psyche.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, despite his lack of active military experience after the Rising, the nature of his death aided the posthumous construction of Collins as a heroic gunman and a military tactician in equal measure. A poem published in *An tÓglách* after his death for example proclaimed that he had ‘died as he lived - a brave and dauntless soldier’ and also included the line, ‘Brave, gallant, gayest of Irish soldiers, he faced death, as he faced duty, unflinchingly, and with a courage born of unwavering faith in the high cause he espoused’.<sup>130</sup> Such sentiments were expressed privately too and in a letter to Collins’s sister Hannie after her brother’s death the writer George Bernard Shaw wrote, ‘how could a born soldier die better than at the victorious end of a good fight, falling to the shot of another Irishman...’.<sup>131</sup>

Regardless of how his death came to be depicted, the decision that Collins made to step out of his armoured car and engage in a shoot-out is a notable one. We cannot ascertain his reasoning but considering the context of the events and what we already know about his character, it is reasonable to infer that Collins’s masculine pride, sense of honour and inclination to take the path on which he would ‘feel like a man’ played at least some role in his death. Pride, honour and dignity were intrinsic components of the masculine role, and the influence of these notions on men’s decision-making is brought

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<sup>129</sup> Townshend, *The Republic*, p.194.

<sup>130</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.IV no.12 (26 August 1922), p.2.

<sup>131</sup> G. Bernard Shaw quoted in Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.277.

to the fore in instances where an individual did the ‘manly’ thing to the detriment of themselves or their comrades.

### Manly performances in the face of death

As a republican militant, there was a *right* way to die and Collins fulfilled it. Mortality, and the martyrdom that came with it, were ever-present in the revolutionary period and men facing execution engaged in performances of manliness just as much as if not more than those engaging in bravado on the battlefield. Values of republican martial manliness – duty, sacrifice, courage, commitment – converged in the deaths of those fighting or suffering for the cause. To die for Ireland was presented as a wholly positive thing in republican discourse and many, but by no means all, Volunteers appear to have echoed that discourse in their own beliefs.<sup>132</sup> The following lines of a Thomas Babington Macaulay poem were recounted in multiple autograph books from the revolutionary period:

And how can man die better  
Than facing fearful odds,  
For the ashes of his fathers,  
And the temples of his Gods<sup>133</sup>

Martyrdom had become part of the republican canon, and there was a stock of heroes who had died for the cause and whose apparent comportment and statements in death

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<sup>132</sup> Notable critics of the glorification of death and sacrifice were Michael Collins and Ernie O’Malley. For instance, Collins urged Terence MacSwiney to end his hunger strike, arguing he was ‘ten times a greater asset to the movement alive than dead’ (quoted in Townshend, *The Republic*, p.194) whilst O’Malley deemed Cathal Brugha’s refusal to personally surrender during a Civil War engagement as ‘seeking death’ and therefore ‘unsoldierly’ (*Singing Flame*, p.137); Frank O’Connor, meanwhile, recalled a ‘big row’ he had with fellow inmates whilst imprisoned during the Civil War. He expressed that he was ‘sick to death of the worship of martyrdom’, had no desire to die and suspected those who had become martyrs had not truly wished to die either, to the ‘fury’ of those around him (*An Only Child* (London, 1961), p.254).

<sup>133</sup> P.J. Murray entry in Dublin Castle Hospital autograph book (21 June 1916) [available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/book-pages/dublin-castle-hospital-june-1916-page-24/>]; UCDA P153 Entry in scrapbook compiled by Frank Carney at Ballykinlar Internment Camp (21 August 1921); In a Civil War autograph book, the poem was adapted in commemoration of Cathal Brugha to read, ‘Oh! How could man die braver, than facing fearful odds, Like Brugha who died for Ireland, and



the revolutionary Volunteers could emulate. They were well-versed in the stories and tropes of sacrifice, and therefore knew how best to die and how best to carry on the tradition of martyrdom. For the remainder of the revolutionary period beyond the 1916 Rising, the sixteen martyrs of the rebellion provided a highly visible, uniform and theatrical model of the correct way to die 'like men'. Indeed, another poem written in an autograph book from Frongoch internment camp proclaimed that Patrick Pearse had 'taught your boys how Irish boys should live' and 'taught your countrymen how men should die'.<sup>134</sup>

Executions in particular became ritualised, as men moved through the same process as their predecessors, from receiving the sentence through writing their last letters to the walk to the firing squad or gallows.<sup>135</sup> Those who were executed from the Easter Rising onwards were acutely aware of the need for a masculine performance as they faced their deaths. The last letters written by men ahead of their executions were especially important for relaying their fortitude, good humour and courage in the face of death to the outside world. As well as professing their happiness to die (see chapter 4), the men used their last letters to tell of their composed, masculine performances. Reginald Dunne, who was hanged in Wandsworth prison during the Civil War wrote that he intended to face death with his 'head up' so that his family could be proud of him.<sup>136</sup> Seán MacDiarmada had similarly written to his siblings that he wished they could see him now, for he was 'as calm and collected' as if he were speaking to them or taking a walk to

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the glory of his cause' (NLI MS 46,623, Two prison autograph books in the possession of Éamon Reid (1922-23)).

<sup>134</sup> Liam Paor entry in Frongoch autograph book (1916) [available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/book-pages/frongoch-2nd-meeting-dail-page-71/>].

<sup>135</sup> The specifically emotional component of manly performances ahead of execution are discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>136</sup> NLI MS 44, 055/4, Last letter of Reginald Dunne (9 August 1922).

see old friends and neighbours.<sup>137</sup> Such descriptions went far beyond the stated recipients and served to consecrate the writer's own hero status and develop the heroic image of the movement at large. Speeches from the dock, where they occurred, fulfilled a similar function and Roy Foster has noted their important role as 'potent weapons' of 'republican strategy' both before and during the revolutionary period.<sup>138</sup>

For the Easter Rising leaders, a manly comportment in front of the firing squad was the final act of their performance, and it called for an air of coolness, fortitude and respectability. A Welsh soldier guard at Richmond Barracks apparently told Laurence O'Neill that he had been part of two of the 1916 firing squads and each man faced the line-up 'with a smile, evident forgiveness in their hearts, with a bead around their fingers, and they died like men'.<sup>139</sup> Whether or not this account is accurate, it indicates the conduct expected from republican men facing death. The brave and relaxed demeanour of the 1916 leaders as they faced execution was reported in many accounts.<sup>140</sup> Thomas MacDonagh, for instance, apparently 'came down the stairs whistling' on the way to the firing squad.<sup>141</sup> Another aspect of their performance in death was to display a gentlemanly courtesy to their captors and executioners. Éamonn Ceannt, for example, wrote a letter to the Commandant of Kilmainham Jail asking him to pass on his 'feeling of gratitude' to his subordinates for their 'kindness and civility' during his 'brief sojourn' in

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<sup>137</sup> NLI MS 41,479/9/3, Seán MacDiarmada to his brothers and sisters on the eve of his execution (11 May 1916).

<sup>138</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, 248.

<sup>139</sup> NLI MS 27, 717, Laurence O'Neill, 'Memories' [of the time spent as a prisoner in Richmond Military Barracks after the Rebellion in 1916] [undated]; In a similar case, Kathleen Clarke was apparently told by a member of her husband Tom's firing squad in 1916 that he 'never saw a braver man die' (K. Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman* (Dublin, 1991), p.118.

<sup>140</sup> McGarry, *The Rising*, p.276.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*; Men who displayed good humour and calm in their dying moments on the battlefield were also praised. Tom Barry recalled three fatally wounded comrades of his flying column who at different moments each 'joked and smiled, dying as proudly as they had lived courageously' in the minutes before they passed (T. Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Cork, 1949), p.219.

their company.<sup>142</sup> Ceannt may have felt a genuine sense of gratitude but regardless, the primary effect of such correspondence was to give the impression of gentlemanly decency and as such to limit the extent to which the British could depict the Rising leaders as barbarous rebels, whilst simultaneously reinforcing the barbarity of Britain's own actions in executing such respectable men. These performances existed through to the Civil War and produced the same impression of courage, calmness and decorum. The 'unaffectedly calm demeanour' of Erskine Childers during and before his execution in 1922 has been noted in particular.<sup>143</sup> Childers shook the hand of each man in his firing squad, then spoke the last words: 'Take a step or two forwards, lads. It will be easier that way'.<sup>144</sup> He had also instructed his sixteen year old son on their last meeting to forgive and shake the hand of every member of the Provisional Government who signed his father's execution order.<sup>145</sup> In maintaining his gentlemanly behaviour until the end, he refuted Free State claims about his 'ghoulishness'.<sup>146</sup>

By upholding the tenets of republican martial masculinity, both its respectable side and its courageous side, these men could be counted alongside the republicans who preceded them as having died 'like men'. According to George Gavan Duffy, for instance, Roger Casement went to his death 'like the man he was', dying 'quite fearlessly and proudly'.<sup>147</sup> The discourse of republicanism in the revolutionary period consistently referred to the need for men to conduct themselves 'like men' at all times. Éamon de Valera had apparently stated, 'we have but one life to live, one death to die, do both like

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<sup>142</sup> NLI MS 50,182/2, Letter from Éamonn Ceannt to Major William Sherlock Lennon (7 May 1916).

<sup>143</sup> A. Boyle, *The Riddle of Erskine Childers* (London, 1977), p.13.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, p.25.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, p.320.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, p.13.

<sup>147</sup> George Gavan Duffy to Michael F. Doyle (7 May 1916), S. Schreibman (ed.) *Letters of 1916* (Maynooth University, 2016).

men'.<sup>148</sup> Those facing execution could simply assert their performance of masculine stoicism by stating that they were going to death 'like men'. Éamonn Ceannt wrote to his wife in 1916, 'I shall die like a man for Ireland's sake'.<sup>149</sup> Con Colbert, meanwhile, simply stated that he would 'die well'.<sup>150</sup> Being a man and being a soldier had become synonymous in the IRA, and Daniel Enright wrote to his family in 1923, 'The sentence of death has just been passed upon me, and I am taking it like a soldier should'.<sup>151</sup>

Those who were not faced with the immediate prospect of death meanwhile expressed a desire to have the opportunity to die 'like men' for the nation. The sanctity of sacrifice and the prevalence of death in the revolutionary period meant that individuals were conscious of and thought about their own mortality, and so expressed preferences about how they wished to die. When Dan Breen fell off his bicycle during the War of Independence, he thought his 'last hour' had come:

The prospect of such an inglorious end did not appeal to me. To be killed in action by an enemy bullet was a fate which held no terror for me; to be killed by the handlebars of a common push-bicycle would have been an ignominious exit from this life.<sup>152</sup>

Breen, like surely many others, knew that if he was to die as a Volunteer, he wanted that death to be a glorious one that fitted with his self-perception as a noble warrior. This is an indication of the way in which Volunteering provided an opportunity to play out a soldierly adventure fantasy. They wanted every aspect of their life and death to meet the heroic narrative that was held in such high status amongst the republican community. Particularly when compared with other far less heroic ways of dying, becoming a martyr whilst fighting the British was an attractive prospect. Charlie Hurley was one IRA man

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<sup>148</sup> NLI MS 50, 137, Autograph book from the prison ship 'Argenta' in Belfast (1923-24).

<sup>149</sup> Last letter of Éamonn Ceannt to Áine Ceannt (5 May 1916), S. Schreibman (ed.) *Letters of 1916* (Maynooth University, 2016).

<sup>150</sup> NLI MS 17,648/5/4, Last letter of Con Colbert to his sister Lila (7 May 1916).

<sup>151</sup> NLI MS 15,443, Last letter of Daniel Enright (14 March 1923).

<sup>152</sup> Breen, *My Fight*, p.57.

who did meet this end, in March 1921. According to Tom Barry, Hurley had repeatedly told him of a premonition that 'he would die alone fighting against the English when none of us was near' and his prophecy came true.<sup>153</sup> Another comrade of Hurley's wrote that he had 'died as he wished – an Irish soldier fearlessly facing the enemies of his country to the last.'<sup>154</sup> The way that Hurley considered his own demise is telling. He may have termed it a premonition, but it seems more likely that he simply had a fantasy about his own heroic death. He appears to have shared that 'premonition' widely, and another man who recounted having heard it was Volunteer Michael Crowley.<sup>155</sup> Crowley had also been present when Hurley's brother, Liam, died of typhoid in 1919 whilst 'on the run' with the IRA.<sup>156</sup> Charlie did not initially show emotion in the moments after closing Liam's eyes, but when they walked outside, he 'grasped [Crowley] and moaned: "Oh, if he had only died fighting on an Irish hillside"'.<sup>157</sup> He had wished a hero's death for his brother as well as himself, and the fact that this was the first thing he said after witnessing Liam die is testament to the desirability of a martyr's death. Even in a moment of emotional trauma, he maintained the language of republican manliness.

The deaths of those that did fall to an enemy gunshot were presented in extremely romanticised terms. In July 1922, ardent anti-Treaty IRA commandant Cathal Brugha ordered the men under his command to surrender to Free State troops when they became surrounded in a burning building on Dublin's O'Connell Street. Brugha himself refused to surrender, and instead stepped out with revolver in hand to face the Free Staters knowing he would be shot and likely killed. Tom Barry regarded his passing as 'epic' whilst Erskine

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<sup>153</sup> T. Barry, 'Charlie Hurley's Work and Death for Ireland' in Ó Conchubhair (ed.), *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, p.165.

<sup>154</sup> T. Kelleher, 'Route of the British at Crossbarry', in Ó Conchubhair (ed.), *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story*, p.157.

<sup>155</sup> BMH WS 1603, Michael Crowley, p.19.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

Childers wrote that Brugha had fulfilled his 'holy mission' as he 'died gloriously for the independence of Ireland' and there could be 'no sorrow' for such a 'wonderful' death.<sup>158</sup>

The aforementioned hunger strike and death of Terence MacSwiney was perhaps the most significant performance of sacrificial republicanism in the revolutionary period. Due to its duration, the level of publicity surrounding it, and the rhetoric MacSwiney had expressed long before as well as during his extended demise, it was a thoroughly 'theatrical spectacle' that Roy Foster had called the playwright's 'greatest dramatic success'.<sup>159</sup> In the contemporary popular press meanwhile, 'theatrical metaphors' were deployed to convey 'the idea that it was a role anyone could perform if they possessed the inner strength to do so'.<sup>160</sup> The religious language and ritual surrounding his demise only heightened the extravagance and pageantry of it all. MacSwiney himself, and certainly his followers, aligned his suffering with that of Christ and presented his hunger striking comrades in Cork as his disciples.<sup>161</sup> The long duration of the hunger strike and the worldwide attention it received were highly valuable propaganda tools for republican tacticians and, as noted earlier, MacSwiney performed the stoic yet affable heroic role as required. MacSwiney's death may have been the most clearly theatrical but more broadly, death and the rituals that surrounded it became an important spectacle of the revolution. There was a propaganda value to be exploited in deaths from execution, battle or hunger

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<sup>158</sup> E. Childers, *Poblacht na hÉireann* (7 July 1922) quoted in UCDA P52, Cathal Brugha Commemorative Booklet (July 1972).

<sup>159</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.98; MacSwiney's plays often concerned patriotic sacrifice and could be read, in the words of Patrick Maume, as 'an exercise in self-fashioning, presenting the heroic self-image to which he aspired' ('Terence MacSwiney', *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

<sup>160</sup> *The Irish Times* (12 November 2014) quoted in F. McGarry, *The Abbey Rebels of 1916: A Lost Revolution* (Dublin, 2015), p.128.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, p.275; Thomas Ashe was also presented at his funeral as a 'Christ-like martyr, whose noble sacrifice had been compounded by the barbarity of the British state' (Elliott, *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity*, p.255).

strike and they simultaneously helped to forge the movement's sacrificial, righteous and sanctified self-identity amongst its own followers.

### Funerals

The spectacle and propaganda of Volunteer deaths continued after the event with public funeral ceremonies. The deaths of republicans had long been exploited for propaganda value in large-scale funerals and that of Fenian Terence Bellew MacManus in 1861 was the first actively 'stage-managed' for maximum propaganda value.<sup>162</sup> MacManus was not a high-profile figure but had taken part in the Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848, and the Fenians orchestrated an enormous funeral in Dublin to honour him. With a mile-long procession and 100,000 onlookers, the funeral was a large-scale display with a large-scale impact. It was both a significant propaganda success and 'helped to reinvigorate a rebel ethos among Irishmen'.<sup>163</sup> Carefully coordinated public funerals became commonplace thereafter. The potential propaganda value of a republican man's death was expressed frankly. For example, when anti-Treaty Sinn Féin TD Laurence Ginnell died in the USA in 1923, the prominent Irish-American republican Joseph McGarrity wrote, 'We propose to have a public funeral, and in death as in life, he may help the cause. We will send the body home if it can be arranged'.<sup>164</sup>

Unlike other moments of collective Volunteer display such as the drilling and parades of the earlier revolutionary period, funerals were not solely the domain of republicanism and nor were the Volunteers the only male group present. Whilst they may

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<sup>162</sup> C. Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983), p.28; I. McBride, 'Memory and national identity in modern Ireland' in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), p.31.

<sup>163</sup> T.J. Brophy, 'On Church Grounds: Political Funerals and the Contest to Lead Catholic Ireland', *The Catholic Historical Review* 95.3 (2009), p.502.

<sup>164</sup> NLI MS 17,486/3/7, Typescript copy of letter from Joseph McGarrity to 'S' regarding the death of Laurence Ginnell (17 April 1923).

have been exploited for republican propaganda value, public funerals were primarily a Catholic ritual presided over by priests. Funerals were not, therefore, spaces where the gunman had authority but instead where he existed alongside another type of powerful masculinity in the form of the clergy.<sup>165</sup> This was no hindrance, and the association with Catholicism provided the Volunteers with a greater claim to legitimacy amongst the wider public. The first major republican funeral that took place after the inception of the Irish Volunteers was that of Fenian Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in 1915. Though he had been a rebel in the past, O'Donovan Rossa had in fact become something of an 'embarrassment' in his later years after endorsing Home Rule.<sup>166</sup> Nonetheless, the opportunity for a collective propagandistic performance by Volunteers was 'adequately exploited' by the IRB, who set up a committee for its organisation.<sup>167</sup> The funeral procession involved 10,000 Volunteers and attracted 200,000 spectators.<sup>168</sup> It provided an opportunity for Volunteers to establish themselves as a military body by carrying rifles, displaying military efficiency and ultimately 'perform[ing] the inheritance of the physical force tradition by a new generation of advanced nationalists to the wider public'.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, J.J. O'Connell described the event as 'especially useful' for it kept the Volunteers 'continually before the public' for a number of days and showed them that they were a 'considerable and fairly well armed body'.<sup>170</sup> Perhaps the greatest value of the funeral, and certainly what gave it its legacy, was the graveside oration of Patrick Pearse that was followed by a volley of rifles. Pearse's stirring words – including the

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<sup>165</sup> At the funeral of Thomas Ashe in 1917 for example, between 150 and 200 clergymen 'led Ashe's cortege through the city streets' (Elliott, *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity*, p.256).

<sup>166</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.215; Republican propagandists brushed over the moderate views O'Donovan Rossa expressed later in life in order to present him as a 'proud, brave and resolute' man who 'embodied the spirit of Fenianism' (NLI MS 13,174/12/1, Souvenir Booklet for Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's funeral at Glasnevin Cemetery (1 August 1915), p.13).

<sup>167</sup> BMH WS 1043, Joseph Lawless, p.20; BMH WS 1765, Seán T. O'Kelly, p.208.

<sup>168</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.216.

<sup>169</sup> Elliott, *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity*, p.109, 114.

<sup>170</sup> NLI MS 22,114, J.J. O'Connell's Autobiographical Account (undated), p.40.



famous line, 'Ireland unfree shall never be at peace' – had a profound impact on the Volunteers who heard them.<sup>171</sup> The oration was also shared widely beyond the republican milieu. According to Batt O'Connor, the 'spirit aroused' by the funeral propelled new recruits into the Volunteers and 'greatly hampered' the British Army recruitment drive.<sup>172</sup> It was, in essence, a 'sensational spectacle' carefully choreographed and performed by willing Volunteers to generate a positive and robust image of their ranks.<sup>173</sup> The combination of a mass of disciplined, armed Volunteers with the rousing words of Patrick Pearse worked to both galvanise and display the organisation's strong and manly character. As with other important republican moments, it was, however, thoroughly constructed after the event to meet the romantic and wholly positive narrative of the Irish march to freedom. For example, whilst the vast majority of depictions attest to the impressive discipline and uniformity of the Volunteers during the funeral procession 'from start to finish', Ernie O'Malley, who was not a Volunteer at the time, gave a very different account.<sup>174</sup> Recounting his observations as a spectator, O'Malley described the 'ungainly' parade characterised by, amongst other things, 'irregular marching' and 'faulty execution of commands'.<sup>175</sup> Such a description is unsurprising given the Volunteers were still a relatively new civilian army. However, it

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<sup>171</sup> P. Pearse, 'Graveside Panegyric' (1 August 1915) in P. Pearse, *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork, 2012), p.112; For example, Seán Prendergast described how Volunteers were 'intoxicated', 'awed' and 'inspired' by the speech (BMH WS 755, p.102), whilst Richard Walsh described the 'tremendous' impact it had across the country as he heard the oration recited everywhere from railway journeys to hurling matches (BMH WS 400, p.8).

<sup>172</sup> O'Connor, *With Michael Collins*, p.45.

<sup>173</sup> BMH WS 400, Richard Walsh, p.8.

<sup>174</sup> John Devoy quoted in Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.94.

<sup>175</sup> O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p.30.

departs significantly from contemporary accounts.<sup>176</sup> It was, of course, in the interest of republicans to relay the events of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral as though they were entirely glorious regardless of the realities. Descriptions of a performance that met the requirements of Irish republican martial manliness helped to relay the desired republican image just as much as contemporary actions could.

The men executed after the Easter Rising were buried in unmarked graves and had no funerals. The first large-scale public funeral following O'Donovan Rossa's was therefore that of Thomas Ashe, which provided Volunteers with their first opportunity post-1916 to perform their collective strength and to communicate narratives of heroic martyrdom.<sup>177</sup> It was again a 'highly staged' ceremonial affair as 35,000 people took part



Figure 7: NLI NPA POLF4, Funeral of Thomas Ashe (Glasnevin, 1917).

<sup>176</sup> The souvenir booklet from the funeral proclaimed, 'The greatest praise and credit must...be given to the staff of the Irish Volunteers, who were entirely responsible for the marshalling that every contingency had been anticipated, and from beginning to end everything seemed to fit in with mathematic precision; there was not a single hitch' (NLI MS 13,174/12/1, Souvenir Booklet for Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's funeral at Glasnevin Cemetery (1 August 1915), p.29).

<sup>177</sup> See Chapter 4 of Elliott's *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity* (pp.238-285) for a convincing argument about how Ashe's death (and not just his funeral) provided a 'watershed moment in which martyrology, the body of the rebel, ephemera, and the use of the Dublin landscape combined to present a unified narrative of republicanism' (p.243).

in the procession witnessed by 40,000 spectators.<sup>178</sup> Michael Collins was this time chosen to speak at the graveside but simply stated after a rifle volley, photographed in Figure Six, that there would be no oration for the volley itself was ‘the only speech which is proper to make above the grave of a dead Fenian’.<sup>179</sup> The nationalist press conveyed the pageantry and emotion of the event for those who had not attended: the *Nationalist and Leinster Times* for example reported that,

The tribute paid to the martyr was probably unparalleled in the annals of history. It was not merely a demonstration of deep sorrow, or a mere protest against the attitude of an unsympathetic administration: it was a national pageant, a parade of true nationalism, which, thank God, has been revived in the Irish soul by thinking, intellectual, honest Irishmen. That spirit pulsated in the veins of half-a-million Irishmen in Dublin on Sunday, and when the last volley was fired over the grave of poor Ashe, a thrill vibrated in every nerve of the tens of thousands of the pick of Irish valour and manhood who witnessed it.<sup>180</sup>

Retrospective accounts from Volunteers echoed this sentiment and attested to the beneficial impact of the funeral in furthering their cause. Joseph Lawless described Ashe’s funeral as a ‘re-staging’ of O’Donovan Rossa’s and Seán Prendergast also aligned the two, claiming that ‘each gave public testimony of the existence and strength of the Volunteer Movement’ but the difference being that Ashe was not a man of the previous generation and instead ‘represented a living generation of men who had fought and suffered and were fighting and suffering in Ireland’s cause’.<sup>181</sup> Prendergast proposed that Ashe’s death and funeral were more advantageous to the cause than any ‘clash of arms’ would have

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<sup>178</sup> Elliott, *Communicating Advanced Nationalist Identity*, p.255; Hepburn, ‘The Irish Way of Dying’, p.185.

<sup>179</sup> Hart, *Mick*, p.151.

<sup>180</sup> *Nationalist and Leinster Times* (6 October 1917), p.2.

<sup>181</sup> BMH WS 1043, Lawless, p.231; BMH WS 755, Prendergast, pp.227-231.

been and noted that ‘for one man lost, the Volunteers gained hundreds of men’.<sup>182</sup> As well as drawing in new recruits, the funeral was also of benefit to the Volunteers because its orchestration led to the formalisation of military structures and the creation of the Dublin Brigade.<sup>183</sup> Moreover, by emulating the rituals of British military funerals, Volunteer funerals like Ashe’s worked to demonstrate the military legitimacy of the organisation. By following a prescribed sequence of events that signalled ‘proper’ military procedure, they affirmed that ‘the fallen Volunteer had been a proper soldier defending a legal government’.<sup>184</sup>

Aidan Beatty has argued that republican men ‘perform[ed] a gendered Irishness in public so as to demonstrate Irish men’s ownership of the public space’.<sup>185</sup> Funerals were the most opportune moment for the Volunteers to express that ownership by joining together, expressing their fervour and displaying their might. They were an emotive spectacle that put ideals of sacrificial republican manliness on a pedestal and were therefore a valuable propaganda opportunity. The emotion of the event drew people in and bound them together, whilst existing Volunteers were provided with a space in which to feel their collective power as ‘part of something’.<sup>186</sup> Funerals combined republicanism with Catholicism, displayed the literal and figurative strength and manpower of the Volunteers and their supporters, consecrated the heroic status of the dead man, reinforced the righteousness of the cause to the wider populace, and reiterated the threat that the army posed to the enemy. These rituals of commemoration were an integral element of a highly effective republican publicity machine, and their immense

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ferriter, *A Nation*, p.173.

<sup>184</sup> Borgonovo, ‘Army Without Banners’, p.397.

<sup>185</sup> Beatty, *Masculinity and Power*, p.95; Lloyd, *Irish Culture and Colonial Modernity*, p.97.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Brophy has noted that the organisers of nationalist funerals ‘played upon the people’s emotions as customs as much or more than their political inclinations’ (‘On Church Grounds’, p.491).

and multifaceted value meant that they remained a prominent avenue for displays of Irish republican manliness through to the Civil War and beyond.<sup>187</sup>

### Conclusion

Martial manliness in the IRA was perpetually affirmed, maintained and exhibited through individual and collective practices and appearances. Performances of manliness were sometimes for the enemy, sometimes for peers, sometimes for both or neither; sometimes they were collective performances intended for collective benefit, and other times for personal reputation. Masculine display could be for the benefit of oneself as much as for an external observer, empowering the individual committing the act to 'feel like a man'. Moreover, the audience of masculine performances was not limited to those who witnessed an act first-hand. Rather, performances of manliness provided stories to be told and retold, and, as often happened in the republican tradition, to be amplified and moulded to fit a commemorative heroic story. The memoirs of former Volunteers were an integral means of relaying that story and tended to sell in great numbers in twentieth century Ireland. These written ego documents and the narratives they reproduce do not simply reflect the self but work to constitute and create the self for consumption by the reading audience.<sup>188</sup> They offered a means to present an idealised manliness by emphasising and perhaps embellishing certain events whilst obscuring and minimising others. Indeed, Volunteer memoirs often concealed the uglier side of IRA activity. The abductions, beatings and killings of unarmed policeman and civilians that occurred at the hands of the revolutionaries tended to either be evaded altogether or reformulated to

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<sup>187</sup> According to Charles Townshend, 'the British would eventually blame their loss of Ireland in large part on the effectiveness of republican publicity' (*The Republic*, p.94).

<sup>188</sup> K. Barclay and S. Richardson, 'Introduction: Performing the Self: women's lives in historical perspective', *Women's History Review* 22.2 (2013), p.179.

minimise the brutality and fit within the heroic narrative.<sup>189</sup> The performance of manly conduct did not end with a man's Volunteer service but extended into his narration of that service, and post-revolutionary Ireland was abound with opportunities to tell tales of valiant adventure.

The ideals of republican martial manliness discussed in the last chapter are clearly discernible in the way that Volunteers performed their role and in how they recounted that performance. Their actions, decision-making and appearances were shaped and constrained by notions of what a Volunteer and true Irishman should be. Ideals and images of manliness were not confined to discourses and rhetoric but played out on the stage of revolution through the actions of Volunteers. Masculine identities are always established through behaviours and appearances, and the act of 'doing' masculinity was magnified in the military, revolutionary atmosphere of 1916 to 1923. The micro, mundane processes of everyday life as a Volunteer did form an integral part of gendered performance but are, for obvious reasons, not borne out clearly in historical sources. This chapter has, therefore, considered moments where masculinity and manliness were 'done' explicitly and overtly through aesthetic appearances, endurance and sacrifice, obstinacy formulated as pride and honour, stoicism in the face of death and the public spectacle of funerals. The remaining chapters will consider how republican ideals of martial manliness and their regulation shaped the emotional lives and relationships of revolutionary Volunteers.

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<sup>189</sup> L. Kennedy, *Unhappy the Land: The Most Oppressed People Ever, the Irish?* (Dublin, 2015), p.193.

## Chapter Three: Emotional Regulation, Management and Control

Emotion within reason is not to be decried. It may be used to create enthusiasm which, tempered by resolution, can work wonders in an organisation; left to run its natural course, it saps all strength and the end is decadence.<sup>1</sup>

These are the words of Seán Moylan, IRA commandant and Sinn Féin politician. The quote epitomises the overriding perception of emotions amongst Irish republicans during the revolutionary years: they had value in imbuing fervour, passion and commitment but beyond that they had to be contained, especially in public. More specifically, men fighting for the Republic were expected to be unwaveringly cool, courageous and good-spirited, and this meant controlling their fear, excitement and sadness. This chapter will explore militant republicanism's anti-emotional rhetoric, the ensuing regulation of emotional expression, and Volunteer's suppression, management and concealment of their feelings in order to maintain a performance of stoic masculinity.

The men of the Irish Volunteers were bound by a strict emotional regime. The concept of an 'emotional regime' was defined by William Reddy as 'the complex of practices that establish a set of emotional norms and that sanction those who break them'.<sup>2</sup> It is the governance of individual and collective interpretations, practices and expressions of emotion. Reddy coined the term 'emotives' to refer to the latter. Emotives are statements made about emotion which have a tangible impact on the individual making the statement and an intended impact on their audience: they are 'instruments for directly changing, building, hiding [and] intensifying emotions' and therefore 'both describe and change the world'.<sup>3</sup> It is the emotional regime that governs 'the conventional

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<sup>1</sup> S. Moylan, *Seán Moylan: In His Own Words* (Cork, 2004), p.32.

<sup>2</sup> W. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), p.323.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.128; W. Reddy, 'Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions', *Current Anthropology* 38.3 (1997), p.331; In practical terms, this means, 'if asked the question 'Do you feel angry?'

emotives authorised in a given community' and regimes can range from the lenient to the strict.<sup>4</sup> The emotional regime of the Irish Volunteers and IRA limited, in Reddy's terms, the 'emotional liberty' of soldiers, treated 'emotional flexibility as a sign of weakness' and expected individuals to 'conceal deviations that [were], in practice, ubiquitous'.<sup>5</sup> This was a regime shaped by ideals of manly control, restraint and fortitude. It did not stop Volunteers from feeling sadness, fear or excitement but framed their conception and regulated their physical, written and verbal expression of those emotions. No emotional regime is absolute, however. There is, by nature of the complexity of emotional and social lives, a significant degree of nuance and variation in the adherence to and implementation of the rules that dictate which emotional expressions are acceptable and which are not. In the Irish revolutionary case, the often exceptional nature of events and environments provided a certain malleability whereby emotions that were heavily sanctioned in most contexts could become permissible under particular circumstances. The next chapter will explore this permissibility as well as moments when emotional experience broke through the social codes of masculinity, but the concern of this chapter is the regulation and management of emotions.

The specific emotional regime of the Irish Volunteers sat within the wider emotional norms and standards, or 'emotionology', of Ireland and Irish republicanism in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> The way that individuals conceive of and experience emotion is historically and culturally contingent: in the words of Rob Boddice, 'how we

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a person may genuinely feel more angry in answering yes, less angry in answering no' ('Against Constructionism', p.331).

<sup>4</sup> Reddy, 'Against Constructionism', p.333; Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, pp.124-6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.315.

<sup>6</sup> Emotionology, first defined by Peter and Carol Stearns, is the 'the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains towards basic emotions and their appropriate expression' (P.N. Stearns and C. Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: clarifying the history of emotions and emotional standards', *The American Historical Review* 90.4 (1985), p.813).



feel is the dynamic product of the existence of our minds and bodies in moments of time and space'.<sup>7</sup> An Irish Volunteer during the revolution was, therefore, likely to have understood his feelings in a different way to his contemporary British adversaries as well as to an Irish republican in the 1980s, for example.<sup>8</sup> Essential to the emotional standards found in the discourses of Irish republicanism in the early twentieth century was a belief in the false, and often gendered, dichotomy between reason and emotion.<sup>9</sup> This notion stemmed from a broader European trend that took hold particularly in the latter nineteenth century, but that was rooted in eighteenth century Enlightenment philosophy and is encapsulated in the words of Immanuel Kant who stated that being 'subject to affects and passions is probably always an *illness of the mind*, because both affect and passion shut out the sovereignty of reason'.<sup>10</sup> According to Barbara Rosenwein, emotions were considered unquestionably 'irrational' until the 1960s.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, reason and rationality have traditionally been regarded as 'male' domains.<sup>12</sup> The contention that emotions have therefore been historically associated with femininity is, however, too simplistic. There has never been a straightforward discursive binary aligning all emotional expression with womanhood. Rather, certain emotions have commonly, though not exclusively, been deemed feminine and others masculine. Most notably, anger

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<sup>7</sup> R. Boddice, *A History of Feelings* (Manchester, 2019), pp.9-10; R. Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester, 2018), p.62); J. Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015), p.32; As Jan Plamper points out, Lucien Febvre of the *Annales* School was an early proponent of studying emotions in history and advocated as early as 1941 that historians consider the ways that the meanings of emotion change over time (Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, pp.40-41).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.836.

<sup>9</sup> Rob Boddice has explained the gendered nature of the reason/emotion distinction: 'Whether one looks at the historical record itself, or at the works that historians have made out of it, it is striking the extent to which reason is opposed to emotion, where the former is linked to masculine powers of abstract thought, governance and leadership, and the latter is connected to feminine irrationality, weakness, the suitability of women for domestic roles and their lack of capacity for a more masculine public sphere' (*History of Emotions*, p.95).

<sup>10</sup> I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (The Hague, 1974) p.149, emphasis in original.

<sup>11</sup> B. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review* 107.3 (2002), p.821.

<sup>12</sup> W. Ruberg, 'Introduction', in W. Ruberg and K. Steenbergh, *Sexed Sentiments: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Gender and Emotion* (Amsterdam, 2011), p.2.

has traditionally been permissible for men whilst women's anger has been considered transgressive. Expressions of fear and sadness, meanwhile, have often been taboo for men, and soldiering men in particular. In the words of sociologist Victor Seidler, men in Western culture are 'encouraged to disavow their own "feminine" qualities, learning to fear their emotions of tenderness and vulnerability'.<sup>13</sup> From a historical perspective, Vanda Wilcox has argued that by the early twentieth century in Western Europe, notions of masculinity 'based on courage, determination [and] virility' worked to undermine emotional expression that appeared 'weak or effeminate'.<sup>14</sup> The control and management of emotions therefore became a prerequisite for manliness, and especially martial manliness. The regulation of emotional expression has indeed long been accelerated in the theatre of war, where it is accepted that certain emotions can get in the way of military effectiveness and undermine the collective performance of strength and defiance. In the two world wars for instance, fear was understood to be 'responsible for inhibiting aggression, disrupting the disciplined 'social unit', and overriding positive emotions such as loyalty to comrades'.<sup>15</sup> Other emotions deemed 'positive' and useful in wartime included anger and pride. Yet when it came to sadness and fear, the gap between a man's emotional experience and the emotions that he 'ought' to express was at its widest during military engagement. It was in the most lethal and frightening of environments that it became the most reprehensible to express grief and to admit fear.

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<sup>13</sup> V.J. Seidler, *Transforming Masculinities: Men, Culture, Bodies, Power and Love* (New York, 2006), p.75.

<sup>14</sup> V. Wilcox, "'Weeping tears of blood": Exploring Italian soldiers' emotions in the First World War', *Modern Italy* 17.2 (2012), p.175.

<sup>15</sup> J. Bourke, 'The emotions in war: fear and the British and American military', *Historical Research* 74 (2001), p.315; The revilement of fear in wartime could occasionally be articulated in medical terms: Vanda Wilcox has noted that in the First World War discourses of the Italian army, 'profound fear – or at least its display – was read as a sign of mental and moral infirmity and "pathologised" as a potential symptom of psychological instability' (Wilcox, 'Weeping tears of blood', p.175).

In histories of modern British or English masculinities, the concept of the 'stiff upper lip' is ubiquitous and has been widely deployed to account for emotional restraint amongst nineteenth and twentieth century British men. Thomas Dixon has identified the central quality of the stiff upper lip as 'the ability to put on a display of bravery and to hide one's true feelings in times of trial and suffering'.<sup>16</sup> Michael Roper has discussed the emotional tensions of First World War soldiers who had been schooled in the 'stiff upper lip'.<sup>17</sup> For these young men, the pressures of soldierly performance combined with a pre-existing mentality of reservation and toughness to produce a strict emotional regime. Whilst their upbringing may not have been so acutely shaped by ideals of emotional regulation as their English counterparts, many of the Irishmen who fought in the revolutionary period had come of age in the long nineteenth century, and they were certainly not immune to Victorian and Edwardian notions of masculine affective restraint.<sup>18</sup> By the turn of the century the belief that men ought to be hard, resolute and unemotional was widespread, and was only entrenched further by the onset of the First World War.<sup>19</sup> The British influence on the emotional standards of the Irish Volunteers

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<sup>16</sup> T. Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford, 2015), p.202.; Dixon sees the 'age of the stiff upper lip' as 'an era of nearly a hundred years, running roughly from the death of Charles Dickens in 1870 to the death of Winston Churchill in 1965, and at its zenith during the First and Second World Wars' (pp.3-4).

<sup>17</sup> M. Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester, 2009), p.20.

<sup>18</sup> R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces* (Oxford, 2005), pp.31-73; E. Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, 2004); See J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle Class Home in Victorian Britain* (London, 2007) for more on the impact that notions of Victorian restraint had on masculinity.

<sup>19</sup> G. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1998), p.109-110; Britain and Ireland had seen different trajectories of their emotional styles. Katie Barclay has noted that whilst both islands valued sensibility and careful emotional expression amongst men and women alike in the eighteenth century, the British mainland was quicker to move towards a 'greater emphasis on stoicism' in the nineteenth century. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Ireland 'continued to require a greater level of emotional engagement from men, marked by gesture and emotional display' and this was evidenced in the preponderance of weeping Irish judges well into the 1840s. By the later nineteenth century however, Irishmen like their English counterparts were expected to assert tight emotional control (*Men on Trial: Performing Embodiment, Emotion and Identity in Ireland 1800-45* (Manchester, 2019), p.114); The expectation that men in general but soldiers specifically should display emotional restraint was common across European nations in the early twentieth century: André Loez, in his work on the control of emotions in the French army during the First World War, has for example observed that 'men's bodies' had to 'obey the rules of wartime mobilisation, refraining from sobbing tears of brutality' and in doing so, they respected the 'pre-existing rules of emotional control and masculine courage which

was not, however, limited to its ideals of emotional restraint. As was illustrated in Chapter One, the conception of manliness found amongst the Irish Volunteers was in part shaped by the desire to push back against feminising and infantilising British stereotypes. An essential part of that stereotype was the depiction of Irishmen as sentimental and over-emotional. This idea was disseminated most clearly in Matthew Arnold's 1867 *On the Study of Celtic Literature* in which he argued that sentimentalism was the essential trait of the Celt.<sup>20</sup> He claimed that the Irish, unlike the English, did not have mastery over their sensibility; they were 'so eager for emotion that [they had] not patience for science'.<sup>21</sup> British officials and commentators had drawn on such ideas to dismiss moments of Irish nationalist political activism in the nineteenth century as the irrational tantrums of an overly emotional people.<sup>22</sup> The stereotypes continued into the twentieth century, and the desire to disprove them arguably contributed to the strict emotional regime of the Irish Volunteers. Within that regime, the overt expression of particular emotions became taboo. The contradictions between the intense emotional experiences of the revolution and the anti-emotional doctrine of the Volunteers created an environment where the

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the conflict [had] reinforced' ('Tears in the Trenches: A History of Emotions and Experience of War' in J. MacLeod and P. Purseigle (eds.), *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives on First World War Studies* (Leiden, 2004), pp.224-5).

<sup>20</sup> Arnold's book was part of the boom in pseudo-scientific ideas about race that had taken off in the wake of the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*; Thomas Dixon has tracked the development of English stereotypes of Catholic Irish people as overemotional since the Reformation. He quotes correspondence between Queen Victoria and Prime Minister Lord Melbourne in 1838 in which Melbourne stated that the Irish were a 'poor set' prone to 'quick feelings' to which the Queen responded, 'All this is very true' (*Weeping Britannia*, pp.27-34).

<sup>21</sup> M. Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (London, 1867), pp.100-3.

<sup>22</sup> S. Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence and Empire in India and Ireland 1914-2004* (New York, 2012), p.32; Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp.165-7; L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England* (New York, 1968); L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot, 1971); M. de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press 1798-1882* (Madison, 2004); These stereotypes of the Irish as inherently emotional people bled into early histories of the revolutionary period too. The second volume of Robert Kee's 1972 *The Green Flag* referred to an 'emotional area in Irish minds, with roots deep in Irish history' (p.258); Declan Kiberd has identified the 'neurosis' of British Victorian stereotypes of the Irish and the way they were presented in opposition to imperialist self-identity: '...if John Bull was industrious and reliable, Paddy was held to be indolent and contrary; if the former was nature and rational, the latter must be unstable and emotional; if the English were adult and manly, the Irish must be children and feminine' (*Inventing Ireland: the Literature of the Modern Nation* (London, 1995, p.30).

negotiation of feeling was complex and difficult. This chapter will explore how that complexity manifested in the experiences and written words, both contemporaneous and retrospective, of the men involved in the fight for Irish independence.

### The rhetoric of emotional restraint

The first edition of *The Irish Volunteer* journal in 1914 proclaimed that ‘to bear cheerfully and bravely everything is the great merit of the...Volunteer’.<sup>23</sup> Eight years later in 1922, Ernie O’Malley wrote the following to Erskine Childers: ‘My years on active service [in the IRA] have taught me to “grin and bear it”, to suffer without complaining, to endure beyond bodily strength, not to be a coward...’.<sup>24</sup> O’Malley described an organisation that successfully regulated the lives and behaviours of its members. In almost every issue published during the revolutionary period, *An tÓglách* had reiterated the high standards which Volunteers should meet. In December 1918 it stated that Ireland was dependent on ‘the fidelity, discipline and determination’ of the Volunteers, and in January 1919 that it was ‘the solemn duty of every Irish Volunteer to keep himself at the top of his endeavour, to maintain the highest possible standard of zeal and energy in his Volunteer work’.<sup>25</sup> These frequent pronouncements of the immense responsibility carried by Volunteers left little room for manoeuvre, emotional or otherwise. Moreover, the sacrificial rhetoric that marked republicanism dictated that Irishmen ought to be glad to be fighting for Mother Ireland – ‘every young man should deem it a privilege to give the best service of head and hand to the Republican State’ – and the expression of any fear or sadness suggested otherwise.<sup>26</sup> This ideal was not new for the revolutionary period. In

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<sup>23</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.1 no.1 (7 February 1914), p.2.

<sup>24</sup> O’Malley to Childers, 26 November - 1 December 1922, in R. English and C. O’Malley (eds.), *Prisoners: The Civil War Letters of Ernie O’Malley* (Dublin, 1991), pp.69-73.

<sup>25</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.8 (16 December 1918), p.2; *An tÓglách* vol.I no.12. (1 January 1919), p.1.

<sup>26</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no.4 (15 April 1921), p.1; *An tÓglách* vol.II no.14 (1 July 1920), p.1.

his diary entry from 14 July 1848, the convicted Young Irelander John Mitchel wrote, 'Sometimes to suffer manfully is the best thing [a] man can do'.<sup>27</sup> Terence MacSwiney famously stated many years later that it was not the nation that could inflict the most but the nation that could 'endure the most' that would triumph, and generally propounded the righteousness of fortitudinous suffering.<sup>28</sup> Sinn Féiner Louis J. Walsh recalled MacSwiney's words in his 1921 prison memoir when stating that he had anxieties but not fears, because 'it was sweet to suffer even a little for Ireland'.<sup>29</sup> According to this rhetoric, a man should show only happiness when fulfilling his soldierly duty. Similarly, the cause itself was considered too sacred and too important to allow emotions to get in the way of achieving it. As had been the case for soldiers in the First World War, tears in particular were a 'waste of time' that undermined patriotism and the war effort.<sup>30</sup> As such, any by-products of the struggle – death of comrades, injury, killing, the breaking of friendships – were to be endured nobly without complaint. During the inquest into the death of Thomas Ashe in 1917, nationalist barrister T.M. Healy presented Ashe as a model of manly endurance for his ability 'to endure discomfort, suffering, sleeplessness, pain and sorrow, and to endure them uncomplainingly and without a murmur'.<sup>31</sup> A poem written in a Frongoch autograph book in 1916 similarly proclaimed that the rebels had 'come forth to fight and die, without fear, or tear, or wavering sigh'.<sup>32</sup> Republican men were in fact expected to conduct themselves at every moment, 'without fear, or tear, or wavering sigh'.

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<sup>27</sup> J. Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (London, 1854), p.61; The Young Irelanders were a group of revolutionary Irish nationalists who mounted an unsuccessful rebellion in 1848.

<sup>28</sup> F. J. Costello, *Enduring the Most: The Life and Death of Terence MacSwiney* (Kerry, 1995); T. J. MacSwiney, *Principles of Freedom* (Dublin, 1921).

<sup>29</sup> L.J. Walsh, 'On My Keeping' and in theirs: *A Record of Experiences 'On the Run' in Derry Gaol, and in Ballykinlar Internment Camp* (Dublin, 1921), p.2.

<sup>30</sup> Loez, 'Tears in the Trenches', p.217.

<sup>31</sup> T.M. Healy quoted in J.J. O'Kelly, 'Kerry Heroes of the Rising' in B. Ó Conchubhair, *Kerry's Fighting Story 1916-21: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.157.

<sup>32</sup> NLI MS 44,038/5, Photocopies of poems written in Frongoch (1916).

Those who did so were celebrated by their comrades and superiors. Tom Barry recalled his pride at the ‘uncomplaining’ nature of his Company after the Kilmichael ambush:

...the men were all sleeping in their wet clothes on the straw-covered floors. I looked at them and a thrill of pride ran through me as I thought that no army in the world could ever have more uncomplaining men. They had been practically thirty hours without food, marched twenty-six miles, were soaked through, nearly frozen on exposed rocks and had undergone a terrifying baptism of fire.<sup>33</sup>

To retain an uncomplaining fortitude when experiencing physical pain and discomfort was cause for commendation. Seán Etchingham’s health was apparently ‘never good but no one ever heard him complain’, whilst Cathal Brugha did not make a ‘murmur of complaint’ during the ‘long excruciating dressing’ of his severe wounds after the Easter Rising.<sup>34</sup> Whether facing mental or physical strain, remaining resolute and not expressing negative emotion was a signifier of manliness.

It was not only during moments of pain and strife, however, that Volunteers were expected to control their emotions. Any excitement or nerves were also to be contained during active engagement in order to maintain an appearance of cool-headed composure. A 1918 edition of *An tÓglách* stipulated that ‘each officer should realise how great is the responsibility that may shortly be forced upon him, and should leave nothing undone to make himself fit for that responsibility, not in a feverish or panicky way, but with cool, calm determination’.<sup>35</sup> To maintain such unaffected composure in any situation was an essential marker of the idealised rational and steadfast soldier. This republican ideal was often articulated in opposition to depictions of the rage-driven, erratic behaviour of the

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<sup>33</sup> T. Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Cork, 1949), p.88.

<sup>34</sup> BMH WS 779, Robert Brennan, p.128; Sceilg [J.J. O’Kelly], ‘The South Dublin Union’ in B. Ó Conchubhair, *Dublin’s Fighting Story 1916-21: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.76.

<sup>35</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I no2. (30 September 1918), p.1-2.

Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. The following words appeared in *An tÓglách* under the heading 'Keep Cool!' during the summer of 1920,

We must, and will, keep cool heads and a clear realisation of the situation. The more the enemy's discipline goes to pieces, the more we must draw tight the reins of discipline in our own ranks. He may rage in blind fury, but he will not succeed in goading us into rash, or ill-considered action.<sup>36</sup>

Rashness was vilified for it signified a lack of emotional control. Emotions were indeed understood as something to have a 'mastery' over, and to not show one's feelings was an indication of the strength of one's will. Volunteers were expected to supplant any inconvenient emotions with those that could benefit the cause and the collective performance of resolution. Sinn Féin founder Arthur Griffith was praised for his apparent lack of passion. P.S. O'Hegarty wrote that '[Griffith] was unemotional and unrhetorical, and he never in his life made a rhetorical appeal or an emotional appeal' and posited that as the basis for his success with Sinn Féin.<sup>37</sup> The sketch writer for the *Irish Times*, 'Nichevo', also referred to Griffith's emotional control in his description of the array of emotional responses to the Treaty divide in 1922. Whilst Harry Boland was 'crying like a child', Cathal Brugha was 'biting his lip in bitter disappointment' and Michael Collins was 'dashing his nervous hand through his shock of jet-black hair', Erskine Childers 'never moved in his place' for 'like Arthur Griffith, he knew how to master his emotions'.<sup>38</sup> Only Boland's emotional expression is depicted as negative, but all are contrasted with the 'mastery' of Childers and Griffiths. Control was synonymous with rationality and strength, and therefore with an appropriate performance of manliness. The breakup of

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<sup>36</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II no.16 (7 August 1920), p.1.

<sup>37</sup> P.S. O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin: How It Won It, And How It Used It* (Dublin, 1924), p.130.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Smyllie ('Nichevo') quoted in D. Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (London, 2015), p.270.



the brotherhood of Irish republicans may have been a moment when some emotional expression become more permissible – as indicated by Boland’s tears which, as will be discussed later, he sought to avoid at other times – but management of emotion remained the ideal.

Emotions occupied an interesting role in the Civil War divide more broadly, and in particular in pro-Treaty depictions of anti-Treatyites. Tom Garvin has shown how those who opposed the Treaty were accused of ‘hysteria and irresponsibility’, and underpinning this was a belief that these ‘fundamentalist’ republicans were ‘indulging their emotions at the expense of the community’.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Gavin Foster has explored how pro-treaty men conceived of themselves as possessing ‘common sense’ and ‘reason’, whilst presenting the anti-Treaty IRA as ‘irrational’.<sup>40</sup> As noted earlier, these categories had gendered connotations. Todd Andrews, himself an anti-Treaty republican, referred in his memoir to the perception that republicans lived ‘on their ignorant emotions’.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Kevin O’Higgins had claimed in 1924 that the ‘wild men’ of the anti-Treaty IRA were unable to keep their ‘instincts’ ‘in check’ and suffered a ‘neurosis’ in their emotional attachment to the republic: some were driven by a ‘great fear’, others by ‘fanaticism, pure and simple’ and others still by ‘an ebullition of the savage primitive passion to wreck and loot and level’.<sup>42</sup> When criticising republicans in the same year, P.S O’Hegarty described

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<sup>39</sup> T. Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1856-1928* (Dublin, 1987), p.146.

<sup>40</sup> G.M. Foster, *The Irish Civil War and Society: Politics, Class and Conflict* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp.44-5; Whilst anti-Treaty men were vilified as irrational and feminine, women who opposed the Treaty were derided by the likes of P.S. O’Hegarty with reference to both feminine and masculine traits. O’Hegarty’s criticisms of anti-Treaty women in his *The Victory of Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 1924) are articulated as a dislike of their overly feminine ‘hysterical’ nature, but he also describes them as intolerant, hard, unlovely and ultimately ‘unwomanly’ (pp.56-58). In his most extreme rebuke he wrote: ‘They became practically unsexed, their mother’s milk blackened to make gunpowder, their minds working on nothing save hate and blood’ (p.102). This points to the difficult bind that politicised women found themselves in in this period: their femininity was used against them, but so was any expression deemed inappropriate for a woman. See also D. Ferriter, *A Nation and Not A Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (London, 2015), p.282 and S. Paseta, *Irish Nationalist Women 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 2013), p.12.

<sup>41</sup> C.S. Andrews, *Man of No Property: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1982), p.13.

<sup>42</sup> K. O’Higgins, *Three years hard labour: an address delivered to the Irish Society of Oxford University on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1924* (Dublin, 1924), p.7

the men of 1916 as 'idealists, men who were in the movement from conviction and not as a result of an emotional wave, men who had consecrated their lives to Ireland from a sense of duty'.<sup>43</sup> This was intended to contrast with what he perceived as the overly emotional persuasions of the anti-Treaty IRA. In their writings, the leaders of the Easter Rising in fact appear more emotional than their War of Independence and Civil War counterparts and were starkly different in their emotional rhetoric to the buttoned-up political elite of the Free State to which O'Hegarty belonged.<sup>44</sup> Most notably, Patrick Pearse had conceived of his nationalism in emotional terms and derided those who 'conceived of nationality as a material thing' rather than a 'spiritual thing':

They have thought of nationality as a thing to be negotiated about as men negotiate about a tariff or about a trade route, rather than as an immediate jewel to be preserved at all peril, a thing so sacred that it may not be brought into the marketplaces at all.<sup>45</sup>

In Pearse's formulation, political conviction could not be divorced from emotional attachment to one's nationality and his description of those who 'negotiated' nationality was in fact redolent of pro-Treaty men like O'Hegarty's insistence that 'reason' and materiality should take precedence over any spiritual conceptions of nationhood. O'Hegarty had evoked emotion as a means to denigrate his opponents, which testifies to the derision of emotional expression amongst pro-Treatyites, but his suggestion that the men of 1916 were not influenced by their emotion was erroneous.

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<sup>43</sup> O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, p.170.

<sup>44</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for the transmutation of romantic, spiritual nationalism into a more conservative and pragmatic nationalism but it is likely due in part to the fact that many of the fiercest proponents of the former died during the course of the revolution, and also to the fact that conceptions of the nation in an initial strike for freedom are, by nature, likely to be more romantic than those that develop later on when that freedom is in sight and the practicalities of a functioning state take precedence.

<sup>45</sup> 'Ghosts', in P. Pearse, *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork, 2012), p.178.

Regardless of whether a Volunteer conceived of his nationalism in 'material' or 'spiritual' terms, the rhetoric of emotional restraint in militant republicanism could still produce a marked distinction between the emotions that he experienced and what he felt able or comfortable to express. For instance, in Seán Prendergast's account of the Easter Rising, he noted the presence of 'fear, cowardice and other unmanly failings' amongst he and his comrades who were 'after all only human and less regimented than the average soldier'.<sup>46</sup> 'Outwardly', however, he 'showed no other sign but that of bravery and a keen sense of doing [his] bit faithfully and well'.<sup>47</sup> Charlie Dalton of the IRA's Dublin Brigade similarly described in retrospect how, at the age of sixteen, he had concealed his excitement ahead of his first operation with Michael Collins's 'Squad' in 1919:

While waiting at the street corner I felt very excited, so that I could hardly control myself. But I did my best to keep as calm as possible outwardly, for fear that any signs of my excitement would result in my being dropped from further work.<sup>48</sup>

He recognised that by appearing excitable, he would not be fulfilling the important soldierly role that he had been granted and would be considered unworthy for the job. His performance was not only regulated by the emotional regime, but by a practical desire to keep his position. A year later, Dalton took part in the assassinations of Bloody Sunday morning and again acknowledged in retrospect that he had concealed his emotions. He described the mood amongst him and his comrades in the run up to the killings as follows, 'Outwardly we were calm and collected, even jesting with each other. But inwardly I felt that the others were as I was - palpitating with anxiety'.<sup>49</sup> The men, faced with a daunting task, displayed a collective performance of emotional poise. They may have all been in

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<sup>46</sup> BMH WS 755, Seán Prendergast, p.127.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p.128.

<sup>48</sup> C. Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade (1917-1921)* (London, 1929), p.64.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p.105-6.

the same position, but concealing fears was about maintaining morale and collective composure as well as about performing manliness. For Dalton, who had joined the Volunteers in 1917 aged fourteen, his attempts to conceal nerves and excitement were also about literally proving himself as a man to those who were older and more experienced than him.<sup>50</sup> Older men were not necessarily, however, any less guarded about their feelings. Michael Collins, for example, wrote in a contemporary account of his capture and detention in Sligo Gaol in 1918 that he would ‘pretend’ to visitors that he was ‘perfectly at ease and content’ despite his ‘state of appalling loneliness with the blackest despair’ in his heart.<sup>51</sup> As a man in a position of leadership, who provided a model of behaviour and temperament for other men, Collins may have felt a particular responsibility to maintain a steadfast veneer despite his suffering. Not all men were, then, faced with the same level of pressure on their emotional expression. The stakes of a masculine performance were higher for those with authority and influence to uphold, as well as those teenage Volunteers, like Dalton, who felt pressure to prove their manly credentials.

### Managing, confronting and channelling emotions

When sharing the news that three hunger striking IRA men had died in Cork prison in 1920, *An tÓglách* exhorted, ‘It is not for Volunteers to make speeches or indulge in emotional language when casualties occur in the war of Irish freedom’.<sup>52</sup> Instead,

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<sup>50</sup> Dalton may have been given a particularly high risk role for his age, but he was not exceptional in his youth (as illustrated in Chapter One). Boys of his age were perhaps less likely to fulfil the expectation of emotional restraint placed upon them, simply because they were essentially still children. On the other hand, those who had grown up in the IRA and experienced conflict and trauma in their formative years may have, towards the end of their service, become hardened and accustomed to that soldierly role: they were socialised into emotional reticence even if they had struggled with it on first encounter.

<sup>51</sup> NLI MS 49,667, Account in Michael Collins’s diary of his capture and detention in Sligo Gaol (April 1918).

<sup>52</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.21 (15 October 1920), p.3.

Volunteers were encouraged to emulate the ‘relentless determination’ and ‘self-sacrificing devotion’ of the dead men.<sup>53</sup> With emotional verbalisations inhibited, some Volunteers found alternative means to express or channel their emotions. The poetry frequently found in prison autograph books was one conduit through which they could express emotion in a way that would be deemed unorthodox amongst comrades. In an autograph book entry from Gormanstown internment camp during the Civil War, an unnamed man testified to the distinction between experience and expression when writing of the recently killed Liam Lynch,

Friends may think that we forget you  
When at times they see us smile  
Little knowing what sorrow is hidden  
Beneath the surface of that smile<sup>54</sup>

Poems like this were not only about concealing emotions, but also the profundity of emotion. They lend themselves to emotional language far more than prose, and the poetry of imprisoned men offers an insight into how these men considered emotion as a phenomenon. A poem written by Seán Milroy whilst imprisoned after the Easter Rising entitled ‘The Spirit Invincible’ was intended to ‘express the spirit and principles of the rebel fighter for National Freedom as contrasted with those of the mercenary or even the soldier fighting for a free country’ and included the lines:

Yes courage you sow when you enter  
The lists of war’s bloody pain  
And face all its horrors undaunted  
And die there if God so ordain  
There is weeping and sorrow at leaving  
There are aching and anguish of heart  
But there’s pride and a glorious thrilling  
‘Mid the sorrow and grief when you part  
There’s honour and duty to bid you  
Face death with a front undismay’d [sic]<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> NLI MS 42,360, Autograph book from Gormanstown Internment Camp (1923).

<sup>55</sup> NLI MS 19,924, Seán Milroy in J.J O’Connell’s prison album ‘Book of Cells’ compiled in Reading Gaol after the Easter Rising (1916).

As many poems from the period do, these lines evoke the manly tropes of courage, sacrifice, pride and duty. They simultaneously, however, acknowledge the tears, anguish and grief that could lie behind a 'front' of stoicism. A particularly dramatic passage later in the poem read,

...The crackle of rifles and thunder  
Of guns that seem mouth-pieces of Hell  
The nerve-racking waiting half-frozen  
Till its time for advancing pell-mell

You shudder and halt ere you face it  
And you count up the loss and the gain  
E'en the bravest may wince at the prospect  
With its torture and carnage insane  
but the **MAN** in your heart calls for courage  
And you conquer the pangs of dismay<sup>56</sup>

Through the medium of poetry, Milroy is able to discuss the emotional strife and fear that came with being a Volunteer but he surrounds it in the familiar language of nobility and facing hardship and death courageously. He presents the manly values of 'honour and duty' as an antidote to pain, sorrow and fear thus affirming that emotions were something for the manly Volunteer to control and 'conquer' rather than to deny.

Poetry written about the emotional trauma that came with Volunteering could be carefully constructed to suit whatever impression the writer hoped to give, but a man's immediate response to a traumatic event was much harder to control. Witnessing the death of a friend was something many Volunteers had to endure during their service, and dealing with shock and grief whilst maintaining the appearance of manly composure in front of comrades could manifest in silence or retreat. Charlie Dalton for example recalled that immediately after Seán Treacy had died, he and Dick McKee 'walked along in silence' but he could see that McKee was 'in great grief' and 'in his heart, mourning for him'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade*, p.96.

When a friend on the other side of the Treaty divide died, negotiating a response was ever more difficult. Liam Deasy, who was a member of the anti-Treaty IRA, recounted the moment he and his comrades heard the news that Michael Collins had been killed. They had been in a meeting which was immediately adjourned before the men left with 'heavy hearts' but 'without any discussion of any kind'.<sup>58</sup> Deasy suggests that they were all mourning, yet none wanted to discuss it. Perhaps they were unsure of expressing their sadness, in case it could be taken as a sign that they were not truly committed to their opposition of the Free State. This was an added component to the existing difficulty of expressing grief amongst Volunteers. The response of Dick Barrett to the killing of Seán Hales, described in an account by Peadar O'Donnell, is particularly telling. Hales and Barrett were both from Cork and had fought closely during the War of Independence but the former had supported the Treaty whilst the latter opposed it. Hales had become a pro-Treaty Sinn Féin TD whilst Barrett was a leading republican imprisoned at Mountjoy Jail following the Four Courts occupations. According to O'Donnell, Barrett's response to the news of Hales's assassination went as follows,

on hearing the news he jerked his head down and walked away from where he was quickly. Later on...I met Barrett at the head of the stairs after the count that evening and I said something about Hales, something to the effect that it was a pity that some person more poisonous than he had not been got. "Ah shag him", Barrett said. "Why did he join them?" It was so vehement that it came off with some pain and I've often wondered had some old friendship lingered there to hurt.<sup>59</sup>

Barrett was clearly conflicted about Hales's death. He first retreated from the situation to be alone, suggesting he hoped to conceal his emotional response to the news from his

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<sup>58</sup> L. Deasy, *Brother Against Brother* (Dublin, 1982), pp.79-80.

<sup>59</sup> P. O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open: An Irish Civil War Prison Diary* (London, 1932), pp.78-79; Barrett was himself executed at dawn the following morning as a reprisal for the assassination of Hales.

anti-Treaty comrades who populated the prison. He then snapped, striking an irritated and harsh tone, again perhaps to conceal his sadness. O'Donnell himself observed Barrett's reaction as a sign of apparent inner turmoil, thus acknowledging the unusual ambivalence of the death of a former comrade turned enemy. There was pressure to adapt to the realities of the new situation and to reject old companionships. The assassination of Hales was, technically, a victory for Barrett's side and the full expression of his grief may have been taken as a symbol of a lack of commitment to the brotherhood of republicans as it was then constituted in opposition to the Free Staters. Moreover, the pressures of maintaining an unaffected manly demeanour may have been especially acute in the homosocial environment of the prison. It is understandable then, that Barrett would attempt – unsuccessfully, as O'Donnell noticed – to conceal his sorrow or channel it into anger in order to ensure his commitment to republicanism and his manly forbearance remained certain in the eyes of his comrades.

Peer approval was indeed central to the maintenance of emotional restraint. Broader cultural and organisational pressures may have taught Volunteers to restrict their emotional expression, but individuals also had a stake in upholding that image of collective resolution.<sup>60</sup> When a soldier shed tears or expressed fears in public, he undermined the image that the army had created of itself, laid bare the horrors of war, and risked stoking the emotions of his companions. In some cases, therefore, Volunteers would actively police the emotional practices of their comrades. At the beginning of the Civil War, Ernie O'Malley was amongst the anti-Treaty IRA men who occupied the Four Courts. When his comrades began to discuss their surrender, he 'tried hard' to stop

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<sup>60</sup> This phenomenon has also been identified by André Loez in his work on the emotions of French soldiers in the First World War. He asserts that witnessing the tears of one's peers was 'unacceptable' because it breached the 'general display of courage' and reminded men of the 'suffering generated by the war, and of the constant effort to hide and control these emotions' (Loez, 'Tears in the Trenches', pp.216-217).



himself crying but ‘could not keep back the tears’.<sup>61</sup> George Plunkett then came over and told him to stop, for it was ‘no use crying’. O’Malley added that Plunkett was ‘always a rock of gentle determination’.<sup>62</sup> Later, when they had surrendered, Peadar Breslin said to O’Malley and the other men who had been weeping, ‘wipe your faces, I can see the lines of tears’.<sup>63</sup> In the first instance, Plunkett affirms that crying is an unnecessary diversion, whilst in the second, Breslin is conscious of the display of courage and strength that the men ought to be showing. Even though O’Malley’s tears were a product of his will to continue fighting, they remained an affront to the appearance of stoic manliness and therefore had to be concealed in public.

The notion that expressing emotion was ‘unnecessary’ is reaffirmed in the memoir of Batt O’Connor. When Michael Collins died, O’Connor and his comrades concluded that there was ‘no time to weep’.<sup>64</sup> Collins’s watchword had been ‘get on with the work’, so they modelled themselves on this sentiment, and there was ‘very little loose talk’.<sup>65</sup> ‘Get on with the work’ in fact seemed to be the catchphrase of the IRA at large: a 1921 issue of *An tÓglách* prescribed that ‘for Volunteers there is only one counsel - the old one: Get on with the work!’.<sup>66</sup> When stated in response to a comrade’s death, these words reinforce the idea that emotional expression was a distraction and a detraction from military efficiency.<sup>67</sup> *An tÓglách* consistently and vehemently reminded its readers of their sacred duty and their need to be courageous and wholly unyielding in their commitment to the task at hand. A 1918 issue stated that ‘each individual Volunteer

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<sup>61</sup> E. O’Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin, 1978), p.119.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.121-2.

<sup>64</sup> B. O’Connor, *With Michael Collins in the Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 1929), p.191.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. No.22 (1 February 1921), p.1.

<sup>67</sup> It was not just fellow soldiers that were encouraged not to cry. Frank Cunnane’s last letter to his Mother stated, ‘my dying wish is that no grief or sorrow be unnecessarily displayed by any of you for the end must come sometime’ (NLI MS 055/8, Copy of letter from Frank Cunnane in Galway Gaol to his mother (10 April 1923)).

should realise his responsibility, the importance of his work to the future of Ireland, and should strain every nerve to ensure his efficiency'.<sup>68</sup> The decisiveness of statements like this inhibited emotional expression or any engagement with personal issues. Continuing 'on with the work' may also have been a coping mechanism and a means of maintaining control, guarding against a further unravelling of emotions by keeping up the semblance of stoicism. As the opening quote of this chapter suggests, a particularly vocal proponent of getting on with the work and not letting emotions get in the way was Seán Moylan. In his witness statement, he outlined his response to the deaths of a number of Volunteers in his company during the War of Independence:

A soldier's sorrow for the death of a comrade is neither insincere nor evanescent; but in war death is a clear possibility; in our circumstances it seemed to be an inevitability. O'Reilly's death and that of the men who had died that week in Nadd did not affect the routine of our existence. There was work to be done and we did it...One by one they had passed on, the next day it might be our turn, some day and soon it surely would be. We had developed a philosophy about it.<sup>69</sup>

Moylan's perspective was that these men were dead, that was just what happened in military conflict and their comrades may have felt sad but there was no time or use in expressing or indulging in that sadness so they should continue their work as before. His acknowledgement that the Volunteers did experience genuine and lasting sorrow is important for it again illustrates that it was the expression rather than the feeling of emotion that was taboo. He had earlier recounted trying to instil this philosophy in his 17-year-old cousin, Liam Moylan, who was very keen to be involved in the operations of his North Cork Active Service Unit. When he was finally granted permission to do so, his

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<sup>68</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I, no.5, (29 October 1918), p.1.

<sup>69</sup> Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p.114; Nadd is a small village in County Cork.

senior, Paddy McCarthy, was shot and killed next to him during the engagement. Seán recounted that Liam was given a great shock and realised the 'grim reality' of war, which before 'to his youthful seeming, was a game'.<sup>70</sup>

Though my heart was sore for the gay, gallant man that was gone I treated the matter casually and I think he was disturbed at the apparently callous manner in which I received the news...I wanted to impress on him then that the loss of men was inevitable and no matter how close our comradeship the grim shadow of death was in these circumstances closer to us all. That the occurrence which to the civilian mind meant tragedy must be accepted by soldiers as the routine of their trade...No longer would his mind be troubled by the heroics of the uninitiated. He was now a soldier.<sup>71</sup>

For Moylan, and probably many like him, keeping a lid on emotions was simply part of a soldier's role. Martial manliness required the management of emotional expression in order to maintain a performance of both fortitude and diligence, even in the face of a traumatic event.

If 'getting on with the work' meant concealing emotions when a comrade died, it also meant not letting emotion get in the way of difficult decision making. During the Civil War, TD Kevin O'Higgins, in his role as Minister for Justice in the Provisional Free State Government, signed the execution order for Rory O'Connor, an imprisoned republican who had been the best man at O'Higgins's wedding just over a year earlier. The executions of O'Connor and three other prominent IRA prisoners were a response to the murder of TD Seán Hales. O'Higgins's role in his former best friend's execution was emblematic of the breakdown of relationships over the Treaty divide which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five. The decision to execute the men faced strong criticism in the Dáil from,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p.81.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

amongst others, the leader of the Labour Party Thomas Johnson.<sup>72</sup> O'Higgins responded, 'what happened this morning was very sad; it was terrible. The times are very sad and very terrible; and all events that happen now must be considered in perspective'.<sup>73</sup> He went on to argue that the executions were not the result of an 'intense wave of anger', 'the mere emotional wave of temptation', 'hot blood' or 'personal vengeance'.<sup>74</sup> Rather, 'it was done coldly; it was done deliberately – simply looking the whole situation in the eye and in the belief that only by that method would representative government or democratic institutions be preserved here'.<sup>75</sup> O'Higgins does appear to have suffered emotional turmoil over the decision – he had been the last minister to sign the execution order and apparently 'collapsed' when he received the news that the executions had been carried out – but when addressing his colleagues and the public, he sought to present an image of total pragmatism whereby honourable politicians forging a new state eschewed all emotion and personal loyalties in favour of making reasoned decisions.<sup>76</sup> His emotion had to be concealed to maintain the veneer of cool-headed, rational manliness. Indeed, the political sphere as well as the military was marked by an overt belief that emotion was the enemy of reason and to be a man was therefore to have total command of one's feelings.

The emotional expressions of politicians were still, however, generally viewed in a more forgiving light than those of militants. Writing in the *Catholic Bulletin* in 1922, J.J.

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<sup>72</sup> Johnson had stated, 'I cannot imagine that anyone who is thinking in terms of anything but vengeance can defend this action...What is the world going to say about Saorstát Éireann? Four prisoners taken out of their cells and executed, not for an offence, not after trial, but as a reprisal, as a warning to other people, with whom they could have no communication for five months!' (Dáil Éireann Debate (8 December 1922)).

<sup>73</sup> K. O'Higgins, Dáil Éireann Debate (8 December 1922).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> M. Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 2004), p.191; A. Clare, *Unlikely Rebels: The Gifford Girls and the Fight for Irish Freedom* (Cork, 2011), p.238; UCDA LA10/370, Desmond Ryan's notes for a biographical article on Kevin O'Higgins (1927).

O’Kelly simultaneously praised the emotional expression of President Éamon de Valera and emotional restraint of former IRA Chief-of-Staff and renowned soldier Cathal Brugha during the ‘sleepless fortnight of anxiety’ that was the Anglo-Irish Treaty debates: ‘President de Valera showed himself to be quite human when he collapsed for a moment at the end. Cathal, proud soldier that he was, remained upstanding to the last’.<sup>77</sup> O’Kelly appears to view both of these men’s performances positively; the first because he reveals his humanity, and the second because he keeps his feelings concealed and maintains his soldierly appearance. This passage is notable in the distinction it creates between ‘human’ and ‘soldier’. The inference is that being a soldier is, by nature, to have your identity and feelings subsumed into this unremittingly courageous, tough performance. As such, although O’Kelly does not appear to see anything wrong in de Valera’s emotions, he maintains that emotional expression is incompatible with being a soldier. More broadly, this relates to military training where soldiers are taught to prioritise victory and the collective above any personal affects: ‘The Volunteer does not talk but **acts**. His only object is to help in making our Army an efficient machine for the service of Ireland’.<sup>78</sup> As a political leader and simply as a man, de Valera’s conduct was still bound by the expectations of restrained manly conduct but he was not a soldier and therefore did not face the same level of emotional regulation as a Volunteer would: his emotion during the debates could be presented as a symbol of his passion for the cause rather than of his weakness in achieving it.

A further indication of the IRA’s strict emotional regime comes from the reading of silences. Many, though by no means all, first-person accounts written by Volunteers are notably dry in their retelling of events. Examples include some diaries, many witness

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<sup>77</sup> UCDA P150/3618, Sceilg (J.J. O’Kelly), ‘Cathal Brugha: As I Knew Him’, *Catholic Bulletin* (1922).

<sup>78</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I. no.1. (15 August 1918), p.1.

statements, and a number of Ernie O'Malley's interviews with ex-IRA men. All tend to simply relay their military and political endeavours, discussing what was done and when, with little to no references to emotions, relationships or any aspect of their personal lives or mentalities. There were of course a number of factors at play in the form that a man's ego documents would take including the context in which it was written (or spoken – the BMH often conducted interviews to gather witness statements), their own vocabulary and writing skill and the intended audience. Nonetheless, the silences remain a telling indication of the pressures upon Irish republican men, and soldiers in particular, to conceal emotion. We can contrast these accounts with those of the women who were involved in republican activity during the revolution. Lucy McDiarmid has contended that 'almost all the women who record the events of 1916 in any detail write about emotion: their own emotion and other people's; expressing it, not expressing it, not being allowed to express it; feeling and not being able to feel'.<sup>79</sup> From what we know of gendered emotional norms in this period, it is unsurprising that women would present a more emotion-laden narrative than men. The fact that 'not being allowed to express it' is included here suggests that it was not just men who faced emotional regulation in this period, but women were more likely to discuss that regulation in their writing. As well as the masculine emotional regime, this points to differences in socialisation: given contemporary gender roles, the women were perhaps likely to have developed more of an emotional lexicon and found it easier to express their feelings than their IRA counterparts.

Aside from the pressures upon men's emotional lives, it is important also to consider the extent to which the trauma and distress that could accompany the Volunteer

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<sup>79</sup> L. McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916* (Dublin, 2015), p.168.

role engendered a genuine desensitisation or numbing of emotion as the revolutionary period progressed.<sup>80</sup> Whilst military training, formally or informally, may have inculcated a resolution amongst men to conceal their own emotions, there was also potential for them to be worn down by their continued exposure to distressing stimulus. They may have become accustomed or desensitised to the risk, violence and loss that came with the revolutionary experience. In his second autobiography, Todd Andrews stated that whilst he had not entirely discarded his 'emotionalism', by the end of the Civil War his emotions were 'tempered by an acquired capacity to cast a cold eye on life, on death'.<sup>81</sup> He later referred to men being 'emotionally purged' by their involvement in the 'national struggle'.<sup>82</sup> Ernie O'Malley, meanwhile, noted in his Civil War autobiography how he became more 'used to the idea of death' during his time in the IRA: 'I was more passive about it now'.<sup>83</sup> In his memoir of the War of Independence, O'Malley had described how his comrades 'talked of bloody happenings with zest and laughed about gruesome doings'.<sup>84</sup> He did not believe this behaviour to be callous, however. 'Bloody happenings' had become part of their ordinary lives, and friends laughed about ordinary things. Moreover, humour and light-heartedness could function as a mechanism for coping with the horrors they faced. On the other hand, Tom Barry wrote that he and his men had become 'hard, cold and ruthless' by early 1921.<sup>85</sup> Their minds were 'darkened' and their outlooks 'made bleak by the decisions that had to be taken'.<sup>86</sup> Barry's language here is rather dramatic in nature, conjuring the stereotypical image of a heroic but merciless

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<sup>80</sup> This phenomenon was observed in the First World War as soldiers continually exposed to highly distressing sights and experiences reported being 'hardened' to emotional stimulus (J. Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London, 2005), pp.215-6).

<sup>81</sup> Andrews, *Man of No Property*, p.7.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p.36.

<sup>83</sup> O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p.224.

<sup>84</sup> O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p.358.

<sup>85</sup> Barry, *Guerrilla Days*, p.187.

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

freedom fighter. This is in keeping with the genre of his book as a popular memoir, published as much to entertain as to inform. His words are, nonetheless, emblematic of the wider trend whereby soldiers could eventually become numb to the horrors around them through consistent exposure.

This kind of fatalism and dulling of emotional responses is common across modern warfare.<sup>87</sup> It appears in part as an unconscious response to overexposure, and in part as a coping strategy in order to carry on despite the brutalities that a soldier witnesses and takes part in. Aside from the violence in Ireland itself, the mass brutality and death of the First World War was perceived to have inculcated a desensitisation to death in those countries that lost men to the conflict.<sup>88</sup> In his 1917 *The Insurrection in Dublin*, James Stephens described how the social and cultural meaning of death had been transformed by the war and as a result, 'Dublin laughed at the noise of its own bombardment, and made no moan about its dead'.<sup>89</sup> This reads as an assertion of defiance as well as of desensitisation. Desensitisation may in fact have opened the door to defiance: it was indeed in the interest of military leaders for soldiers to be hardened to violence and death, and therefore to be more forthcoming in their willingness to fight and kill. If we are to assess the role of masculinity and emotions in men's experiences of the revolutionary period, it is important to keep in mind that this was an unusually tense and violent time and there is no single way that those circumstances could shape an individual's emotional life: some may have felt their emotions numbed, others sharpened. Either way, they were compelled to conceal many of the emotions that they did experience.

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<sup>87</sup> M. Hewitson, "I Witnessed": Soldiers, Selfhood and Testimony in Modern Wars', *German History* 28.3 (2010), p.311.

<sup>88</sup> J. Horne, 'Ireland and the 'Greater War' in J. Borgonovo, J. Crowley, D. Ó Drisceoil and M. Murphy, *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (New York, 2018) p.204.

<sup>89</sup> J. Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1917), p.49.



### Stoicism and the concealment of emotion

On 23 February 1796, Theobald Wolfe Tone of the United Irishmen wrote in his diary, 'Tis but in vain, for a soldier to complain'.<sup>90</sup> Ernie O'Malley wrote in his memoir that he and his men often quoted this line when they were in trouble, and it was also written in autograph books from the period.<sup>91</sup> In a similar vein, 'The Book of Cells', a collection of writings produced by IRA prisoners in Mountjoy Jail in November 1922, stated in its foreword that 'it is the duty of all Republican prisoners to keep up morale' and later quoted a line written by the highly sentimental American poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox, '...the man worthwhile is the man who will smile when everything goes dead wrong'.<sup>92</sup> Though they are themselves written in an emotive way, these examples once again point to a culture in which expressing negative emotion was actively condemned. Tears in particular were taboo. Men not being 'supposed' to cry has, of course, a broader resonance.<sup>93</sup> Thomas Dixon has argued that 'the notion that weeping is weak and effeminate is always in the background of discussions of tears in western cultural history'.<sup>94</sup> However, as Dixon acknowledges, this notion was not always in the foreground

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<sup>90</sup> T. Wolfe Tone, *Memoirs of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (London, 1827), p.233.

<sup>91</sup> O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p.141; NLI MS 33,717, Autograph book from Gormanstown internment camp (1923).

<sup>92</sup> NLI MS 30,849, Political miscellany entitled 'The Book of Cells' compiled by Republican Prisoners in Mountjoy Jail (November 1922); Wheeler Wilcox was a particularly sentimental poet whose work was imbued with emotional cliché. It is notable that men of the IRA were engaging with her poetry.

<sup>93</sup> Depictions of men's tears in literature are useful in illuminating the trajectory of cultural perceptions about masculinity and emotion. See, for example, R. W. Richgels, 'Masculinity and Tears in 19th-century Thinking: A Comparison of Novels in France and Britain article', *Studies in the Humanities* 21.2 (1994), pp.134-146, which tracks the way in which men's tears became increasingly taboo across the nineteenth century, and were also consistently regarded as more deviant in Britain than France throughout the period. Richgels observed that by the 1890s, 'weeping by men had all but disappeared from the British novels, and the idea of firm manly discipline [was] solidly in place' (p.142). Thomas Dixon has also noted the longevity of notions that it was inappropriate for men to cry with reference to a number of Shakespeare's works where the tears of men and boys are condemned (Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, p.48).

<sup>94</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia* p.145; Weeping was an important component of colonial British stereotypes that depicted the Irish as overly emotional and as Dixon notes, 'forms of weeping' associated with Catholicism were deemed 'excessive, effeminate and ineffectual' from the reformation through to the twentieth century (p.28).

and because tears can have multiple meanings, there have always been periods and contexts in which male weeping is condoned.<sup>95</sup> There were some moments during the Irish revolutionary period when men's tears became permissible (and these will be considered in the next chapter), but in the vast majority of circumstances they were reprehended.

Across the revolutionary period, the discourse peddled by republican soldiers themselves actively discouraged their comrades from crying. A poem written in the autograph book of Thomas Malone in 1916 sums up this sentiment:

Oh mourn them not the martyred few  
That Mother Éire found so true  
No whine nor cry nor tearful eye  
But went like men  
To death<sup>96</sup>

The poem states emphatically that crying and being a man are mutually exclusive. It impels men not to mourn their martyred comrades, and also refers to the masculine performances of those martyrs who faced their deaths without tears. One of those men was Thomas MacDonagh who wrote in his final letter before being executed, 'it breaks my heart to think that I shall not see my children again, but I never wept or mourned'.<sup>97</sup> MacDonagh makes an interesting distinction between the feeling of heartbreak and the somatic expression of tears or the performed expression of mourning. He refers to the management rather than the denial of emotion, and the inference is that he had mastery over his outward emotional state. Those who grieved for the executed Easter Rising leaders were also compelled to control their emotions and a popular poem frequently recited in prison autograph books began with the line, 'no tears we shed, dear

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>96</sup> NLI MS 44,038/3 Autograph book of Thomas Malone (1916).

<sup>97</sup> Last letter of Thomas MacDonagh (2 May 1916), S. Schreibman (ed.) *Letters of 1916* (Maynooth University, 2016); Another source claims that the final word in this sentence is 'murmured', not 'mourned' (NLI MS 33,706/1).

Casement'.<sup>98</sup> The containment of emotion surrounding death in 1916 set a precedent of anti-emotional bravado for the remainder of the republican struggle. In 1920, Terence MacSwiney wrote to his fellow hunger striking comrades in Cork Jail when one of their men died, 'no tears but joy for our comrade who was ready to meet his God and die for his country'.<sup>99</sup> This rhetoric lasted into retrospective accounts too, and in 1952 Seán Prendergast wrote in tribute to Patrick Pearse, 'We mourn you but not with useless tears or any outward sign of bereavement'.<sup>100</sup> By referring to the tears as 'useless', Prendergast's words reinforce the idea that tears were an unnecessary distraction and therefore to be avoided. The distinction between the internal, hidden and therefore permissible emotional state of mourning, and the 'outward signs' of emotion to be evaded is clear.

The contention that weeping was inappropriate for Volunteers is made most explicit in contemporary and retrospective accounts that describe moments when tears were actively held back. A particularly telling example of this comes in the words of Dan Breen, remembering in 1924 the trauma of being arrested by Free State forces a year earlier:

I am not a soft-hearted man. Much hardship had steeled me against tears, but on that day pride alone kept me from crying like a child. For five years I had defied Britain's garrison. I had suffered everything willingly for my country. Now, in my native country, I was a prisoner in the hands of my own countrymen.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid; Jimmy Mulherns entry in Frongoch autograph book (1916) [available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/books/frongoch-interment-camp-1916-and-second-meeting-of-dail-eireann-april-1919-possibly-belonged-to-w-flynn/>]; Roger Casement was the last of the Easter Rising martyrs to die for his involvement in the organisation of the rebellion.

<sup>99</sup> NLI MS 8446/20, Telegram from Terence MacSwiney to Cork Prisoners (1920).

<sup>100</sup> BMH WS 755, Prendergast, p.168.

<sup>101</sup> Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, p.179.

Breen affirmed his status as a tough man before admitting that he would have wept if it were not for his pride. He was overwhelmed with emotion but consciously maintained his performance of stoicism, which was particularly important in front of enemy soldiers. Others were subtler in their descriptions of maintaining a performance of manliness through the control of emotion. Seán T. O'Kelly for example wrote that he could 'scarcely restrain [his] emotions' when the Treaty debates came to a conclusion, whilst at the same moment Ernie O'Malley apparently 'sat there white-faced, feeling as if [he] would like to cry'.<sup>102</sup> Both men recall a strong emotional feeling, or desire to express emotion, but managed to keep them concealed.<sup>103</sup>

Some men sought to maintain emotional control even when alone. Writing in 1918, Darrell Figgis recalled the following moment when he was first locked in a cell in Castlebar prison:

When the door clanged against me and the key grated in the lock, an almost overpowering desire came on me to shout aloud and batter on the doors with my fists. That was succeeded by a feeling of utter helplessness. Tears had need to be controlled.<sup>104</sup>

This passage suggests that emotional restraint, for Figgis at least, was not only about public appearances but also about maintaining the *feeling* of manliness. Although no one would see his tears, he felt that they had to be controlled and stoicism performed for its own sake. Moreover, he may have feared that externalising his emotion would begin a broader psychological unravelling and loss of control. Figgis is unlikely to have been

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<sup>102</sup> NLI MS 27,707, Typescript in English of Seán T. O'Ceallaigh's memoirs (undated); O'Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.46.

<sup>103</sup> There were grounds to conceal tears of happiness, too. Charlie Dalton had gone on holiday immediately after the 1921 Truce was called, and of his return to Dublin by boat he wrote, 'I saw our tricolour flag waving from every window. I am not going to describe my emotions. I felt like a kid, a lump in my throat, trying not to burst out crying'. (*With the Dublin Brigade*, pp.177-8).

<sup>104</sup> D. Figgis, *A Chronicle of Jails* (Dublin, 1918), pp.16-17.

alone in maintaining this silent performance, and it has a longer pedigree in, for example, John Mitchel's influential 1854 *Jail Journal*.<sup>105</sup> To announce one's emotional strength or to demonstrate it physically, by not crying for example, functioned, in Reddy's terms, as an emotive; as 'an attempt to feel what one says one feels'.<sup>106</sup> If an individual states that they *don't* feel certain emotions, it is also an attempt to produce that social reality. A man's outward verbal or physical presentation of emotional restraint and stoicism could have a 'self-altering effect', whether he was alone or in front of an audience.<sup>107</sup>

Not all prisoners, however, maintained their composure when alone. When he had been moved to Stafford Jail and was placed in solitary confinement, Figgis asked his corporal, a sympathetic London Irishman, what the other men were doing when he spied on them in their cells. He replied that most simply sat on their stools and stared at the wall but 'lots of them are crying – some you wouldn't think of'.<sup>108</sup> The inclusion of 'some you wouldn't think of' is important here. The prison officer suggests that many of those he had seen crying would otherwise appear to be especially tough and defiant, indicating a notable gap between these men's outward appearances and the reality of their emotional states. The men that Figgis's corporal witnessed saved their emotional expression for the moments that they were alone: the distinction between public performance and private experience was significant.<sup>109</sup> Crying alone may have been a means of maintaining and managing their steadfast public performances, and perhaps those with the toughest exteriors – those 'you wouldn't think of' – therefore had the most

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<sup>105</sup> Mitchel, *Jail Journal*, p.112.

<sup>106</sup> Reddy, 'Against Constructionism', p.332; W. Reddy in J. Plamper, 'The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns', *History and Theory* 49 (2010), p.240.

<sup>107</sup> Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p.128.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p.80.

<sup>109</sup> In his work on French soldiers in the First World War, André Loez argued that 'combatants do not only refrain from crying, they also hide when tears turn out to be irrepressible' ('Tears in the Trenches', p.215).

to 'let out' given the opportunity. Their solitary confinement came in the aftermath of the Easter Rising and the surrender on 30 April 1916 had been an extremely emotional moment for the men involved. According to the account of Joe Good, when Tom Clarke spoke to a Cumann na mBan girl with a message for his wife – 'If you see my wife, tell her that the men fought...' – he was 'unable to finish, and turned away'.<sup>110</sup> It is not made explicit, but this suggests Clarke was about to cry and turned away from the girl and his fellow fighters so that they would not see his tears. For Clarke and the men crying in their cells, emotional expression was a solitary act and tears in particular had to be hidden from public view in the maintenance of a masculine appearance.

Whilst soldiers may have faced a particular level of pressure to suppress emotions, the constraints of masculinity in general were more widespread. This becomes evident in the prison diary of William Gogan, a 60-year-old man who was arrested in 1920 for displaying a Republican ballad in his shop. When Gogan's son first visited him, he was 'almost breaking down but succeeded in maintaining [his] self-control'.<sup>111</sup> Later, he was glad that his son had managed to prevent his wife from visiting the prison, because he was sure that the 'only effect would have been to unman [him]'.<sup>112</sup> In the first instance, Gogan actively holds back his emotion, and in the second, he is glad to have avoided the emotional stimulus that would have had the effect of undermining his manliness. The term 'unman' was also used by James Connolly when visited by his wife after receiving the news that he would be executed after the Easter Rising. According to his daughter Nora, her mother began to cry to which James responded, 'don't cry Lillie, you will unman me'.<sup>113</sup> In each instance, the fragility of the masculine stereotype is exposed as the men

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<sup>110</sup> J. Good, *Enchanted by Dreams: The Journal of a Revolutionary* (Kerry, 1996), p.53.

<sup>111</sup> NLI MS 41,634/1, Mountjoy Diaries of William Gogan (1920).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> BMH WS 286, Nora Connolly O'Brien, p.51.

fear that the presence or emotion of their loved ones will cause their masculine barriers to fall and their own vulnerability to become exposed. Emotion stokes emotion, and these domestic prompts could lead to a wider unravelling of a man's tightly knit exterior. Lucy McDiarmid has convincingly argued that for Connolly the motivation to maintain that appearance of stoic manliness came in part from the fact he was 'already moving towards the history books, becoming the hero whose death will be described for Irish people of the future, and such a man does not want his masculinity diminished by an account of weeping in his final hours'.<sup>114</sup> McDiarmid also notes two other examples where the men facing execution in 1916 avoided the emotions of their female family members: Seán Heuston 'begged' his sister and mother not to 'break down' when they visited him in his cell, whilst Con Colbert wrote to his sister explaining he had not asked her to come visit him before he 'left this world' because it would 'grieve us both too much'.<sup>115</sup> In a similar instance during the War of Independence, Harry Boland wrote in his diary of the moment in May 1920 when he left Dublin again to return to the United States: 'Bid good-bye to Dublin once more. My mother comes to Abbey St[reet]....a hasty good-bye to all people and run out so that I may not witness the tears of my dear loved Mother, the best in all the world'.<sup>116</sup> Boland actively avoids seeing his mother's tears, which he anticipates, so as not to face the emotions that he knows they will stir in him. His private life, represented by his mother, encroaches on, and risks undermining, his public performance. It is notable that in each of these cases, it is the presence of a woman that the men fear will make them emotional. This suggests that individuals themselves subscribed to the notion, common across contemporary discourse, which associated weeping with

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<sup>114</sup> McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution*, p.143.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, pp.144-5.

<sup>116</sup> UCDA P150/1170, Diary entries of Harry Boland covering the period 1 October 1919 to 4 August 1920.

femininity.<sup>117</sup> It is, of course, also understandable that encounters with any loved one would provoke an emotional resurgence: these men aimed to maintain a heroic soldierly performance, and their wives and mothers were acute reminders of their homes and domestic lives where they were husbands and sons, not revolutionaries.

Underlying each of these examples of emotional concealment by republican men, is, ultimately, the fear of appearing feminine. Sadness and tears were taken as symbols of fragility and weakness, which did not fit within the narrow confines of IRA masculinity, so had to be avoided to maintain military and social standing. This desire to avoid appearances of femininity is made explicit in a 1920 letter from President Éamon de Valera to Seán Nunan, his friend and colleague who had been in his service during his trip to America. De Valera begins thanking Nunan – ‘as long as our country can go on producing such devoted sons there need to be no fear that she will weather the darkest storms’ – but then stops himself mid-sentence and declares,

I will not write the sentimental things I feel lest I lose your good opinion – for thinking over the companionship of the year and a half the recollections of various sorts that crowd upon me are such that what I am tempted to write you could count as womanish.<sup>118</sup>

This is a very overt case of emotional concealment in the maintenance of a manly performance, which was integral to the reputation of a leader like de Valera. The letter clearly infers that revealing one’s emotions is a feminine act and therefore incompatible with his masculine status. De Valera is also using silence rather cleverly as a device here: he is able to express his affection for Nunan without explaining it specifically. By writing that he could appear ‘womanish’ if he did write down his feelings, he lets Nunan know

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<sup>117</sup> Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, p.116.

<sup>118</sup> UCDA P150/954, Typescript copy of letter of farewell from Éamon de Valera to Seán Nunan (10 December 1920).



the extent of the affection he feels towards him, but also retains his treasured masculine composure. The letter indicates that it is the expression rather than the experience of emotion that is taboo. Once again it is apparent that men were not expected to feel no emotion, and their feelings only became a problem when they were shared and had an impact on their own, or their comrades', behaviours and masculine performances.

### Managing fear

As a period marked by violence, secrecy, arrest and death, there was potential for fear at every turn during the conflicts of the revolutionary period. Ernie O'Malley observed that 'some men were nervous and peaked; some did not care, but at odd moments a man might drop his covering and show his anxiety, fear or dread. Boys and men laughed about executions and ragged one another's concealed fears'.<sup>119</sup> By referring to a 'covering' that could 'drop' to reveal emotional turmoil, O'Malley acknowledges that his peers would actively conceal their fears in the maintenance of an appropriate Volunteer performance. The appearance of courage and fortitude was indeed integral to the production of soldiering masculinity, and fear had long been reviled as oppositional to the spirit of Irish republicanism. As Catriona Kennedy has illustrated, the United Irishmen of the 1798 rebellion considered their ideals to be entirely 'rational' and Wolfe Tone and his associates therefore dismissed those who opposed them as exhibiting 'womanish' and 'childish fears'.<sup>120</sup> Their republican counterparts over a century later displayed similar antipathy towards fear. Courage, and therefore fearlessness, was a requisite for an authentic martial masculine identity and it was the trait that individuals most commonly

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<sup>119</sup> O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p.224.

<sup>120</sup> C. Kennedy, *'What Can Women Give But Tears': Gender, Politics and Irish National Identity in the 1790s* (PhD thesis) (University of York, 2004), p.56.

referred to when praising a comrade. In his eulogising of Tom Clarke, Seán Prendergast for example wrote that he was ‘a man who did not know the meaning of fear, who disdained the word caution, who prized honour, service and duty as the three most exalted and exalting virtues of a liberty loving Irishman’.<sup>121</sup> Prendergast’s description fits neatly with the popular rhetoric but as the passage from O’Malley shows, the reality on the ground was not so neat and men’s fears were (sometimes thinly) veiled behind their outward performances.

Expressions of fear have long been stigmatised in wartime for their perceived negative impact on military effectiveness and success.<sup>122</sup> Amongst Irish republicans, the widespread glorification of courage was indeed accompanied by an active denouncement of fear. A 1918 issue of *An tÓglách*, implored each man to ‘do his best to be a faithful and efficient soldier of the Army of Ireland, an army without fear and without reproach’.<sup>123</sup> A 1919 issue told Volunteers that they must ‘see the thing through’, no matter what ‘sacrifices are required’ and ‘dangers are to be faced’, and a 1920 issue quoted the words of the ‘great German air-fighter’, Baron Von Richthofen: ‘afraid is a word that must never be used by a man who defends his country’.<sup>124</sup> Such pronouncements from the widely circulated journal of the IRA amplified any existing and more subtle pressures upon fighting men to mask their fears. Moreover, expressions of fear could be policed by comrades in the same way that tears were: Cathal Brugha apparently ‘knew nothing of fear and had little sympathy for anyone who did’.<sup>125</sup> To be cool, calm and collected in the

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<sup>121</sup> BMH WS 755, Prendergast, p.169.

<sup>122</sup> J. Bourke, ‘The emotions in war: fear and the British and American military’, *Historical Research* vol.74 (2001); Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*, p.200; M. Roper, ‘Between Manliness and Masculinity: The ‘War Generation’ and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950’, *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (2005); R. Peterson and E. Liaras, ‘Countering Fear in War: The Strategic Use of Emotion’, *Journal of Military Ethics* 5.4(2006) pp.317-333.

<sup>123</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I no.9 (31 December 1918 and 15 January 1919), p2.

<sup>124</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.I no.10 (1 February 1919), p.2; *An tÓglách* vol.II, no.10 (1 May 1920), pp.2-3.

<sup>125</sup> NLI MS 9,620, ‘Addendum: Cathal Brugha’ in T.K. Moylan, *A Dubliner’s diary 1914-1918* [undated], p.66.

face of danger indeed occasioned high commendation from comrades and commentators. In the words of William Reddy, 'emotions are subjected to normative judgements and those who achieve emotional ideals are admired and endowed with authority'.<sup>126</sup> Seán Moylan believed that truly fearless men were exceptional, and described his friend Paddy McCarthy as 'one of that sparse but richly endowed brotherhood, the men who knew no fear'.<sup>127</sup> Michael Lynch meanwhile, when recounting an ambush in which IRA men had posed as British soldiers, praised the coolness of Emmet Dalton:

I can never forget Emmet Dalton in that moment. He sat at the back of the car coolly smoking a cigarette and immaculate in his British uniform. He was completely unperturbed although he had only a few moments before undergone an experience that would have driven most men crazy. Let me say at once that this was no pose, no bravado, but sheer unadulterated nerve.<sup>128</sup>

The fact that Lynch includes this final sentence demonstrates that men acknowledged that displays of bravery *could* be false bravado, but he deemed Dalton's conduct to reflect his genuine emotional state. This was so significant that he would apparently 'never forget'. Lynch's respect for Dalton's unshakeable stability tallies with Jessica Meyer's conclusion that amongst First World War British soldiers, it was 'lack of reaction when faced with the dangers of war', rather than specific acts of bravery, that were consistently 'recalled and admired' in memoirs.<sup>129</sup>

In a similar vein to their assertions that they had not cried, or would not cry, men would affirm their own masculinity by declaring their fearlessness. In one of his final statements from Kilmainham Gaol before his execution Éamonn Ceannt wrote,

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<sup>126</sup> Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling*, p.323.

<sup>127</sup> Moylan, *In His Own Words*, p.60; He added that '[W.B] Yeats must have had him in mind when he described his "affable irregular cracking jokes as though to die by gunshot were the finest play under the sun"'.  
<sup>128</sup> NLI MS 22,117 (i), Statement of Michael Lynch (2 November 1935).

<sup>129</sup> Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2009). p.144.

I wish to record the magnificent gallantry and fearless, calm determination of the men who fought with me. All, all were simply splendid. Even I knew no fear nor panic nor shrunk from no risk even as I shrink not now from the death which faces me at daybreak.<sup>130</sup>

Ceannt aligns his fearlessness in battle during Easter week with his fearlessness in the face of execution. Again, it is important to consider here how the words and performances of the 1916 martyrs influenced their followers in subsequent years and acted as ideals for future fighting men to emulate.<sup>131</sup> They provided a model for those who hoped to join the pantheon of Irish republican heroes during the War of Independence and Civil War, just as Patrick Pearse and company had hoped to mimic the likes of Wolfe Tone.<sup>132</sup> After the Easter Rising, Robert Brennan was one of those who received a death sentence. He stated in his 1950 memoir that he was ‘not afraid’ and knew that he would ‘walk out to meet death as easily as the others had done’, and that knowledge gave him great joy.<sup>133</sup> His sentence was later commuted to five years penal servitude which he described as an ‘anti-climax’.<sup>134</sup> Brennan was, of course, playing into the tropes of a republican memoir, but the fact that he states his pride in behaving like ‘the others’ points to the importance of the 1916 martyrs as models for later performances, or professions, of fearlessness.

The Dáil debates over the Anglo-Irish Treaty in late 1921 were another moment where men were compelled to iterate their supposed fearlessness. Eoin O’Duffy stated on

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<sup>130</sup> NLI MS 41,479/9/1, Three typed copies of statements by Éamonn Ceannt from Cell 88, Kilmainham Gaol (7 May 1916).

<sup>131</sup> Those who visited the Easter Rising leaders before their executions also promoted the narrative that the martyrs were fearless in death. For example, Grace Plunkett wrote that the last time she saw her husband Joseph he was ‘not frightened – not at all, not the slightest’, whilst Father Augustine who was the last to see Plunkett reported, ‘he was absolutely calm, as cool and self-possessed as if he looked on what was passing and found it good. No fine talk. No heroics. A distinguishing tranquillity...’ (McDiarmid, *At Home in the Revolution*, p.144).

<sup>132</sup> R. Mytton, ‘Chapter One: Resurrecting Irish Manliness’, *Nationalist Masculinities and the Irish Volunteers 1913-1916* (University of Sheffield MA dissertation, 2016), pp.12-23.

<sup>133</sup> R. Brennan, *Allegiance* (Dublin, 1950), p.92.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

17 December 1921 that for him, 'war has no horrors': 'I am not a bit afraid of war and the men as I know them have no fear of it'.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, Seán Etchingham on the same day announced that, 'though my head is grey, on my own behalf I say that I do not fear death I have contempt for it'.<sup>136</sup> Such vocal iterations of personal courage were part of a wider culture of masculine posturing that, combined with statements coming from IRA Headquarters telling men to be unwaveringly courageous, created an environment where a man could feel insecurity about his own soldierly, and manly, credentials. M.J. O'Connor appeared to be concerned about his own courage in comparison to his peers during his imprisonment after the Easter Rising:

Lying awake, one was inclined to many beliefs. Surely the men who could laugh, joke and make merry while in durance vile must have clear consciences; they were undoubtedly men without fear, prepared to sacrifice all for Dark Rosaleen.<sup>137</sup>

Frank Gallagher, meanwhile, mused openly about his fears in his aptly titled diary written during his 1920 hunger strike, *Days of Fear*. The diary is a reflection of his thoughts during a period of suffering and reads as a meandering stream of consciousness. On Wednesday 14 April 1920, he wrote that he was not afraid of death if it came the following day – 'death tomorrow is always acceptable if it is not certain' – but considering immediate death was 'different'. Gallagher recognised that it was far easier for a man to feel courageous and express that courage when the threat was not directly in front of him. He followed this by asserting, '...I shall not be afraid openly...The others will not know...'.<sup>138</sup> This explicit expression of emotional concealment was followed later on the same day with an admission of intense emotional turmoil:

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<sup>135</sup> E. O'Duffy, Dáil Éireann Debate (17 December 1921).

<sup>136</sup> S. Etchingham, Dáil Éireann Debate (17 December 1921).

<sup>137</sup> M.J O'Connor, 'Stone Walls...': *An Irish Volunteer's Experiences in Prisons and Internment in England and Wales After the 1916 Rising* (Dublin, 1966), p.19.

<sup>138</sup> F. Gallagher, *Days of Fear: Diary of a 1920s Hunger Striker* (London, 1928), p.110.

The horror is beginning again, the madness is coming back...I would run and run if I could, anywhere, away from my thoughts...I feel it all, fear, despair, doubt, revulsion...I cannot do anything to stop it now...<sup>139</sup>

Of course, Gallagher's mental state was affected by his hunger striking, but the fact that this explicit expression of an intense feeling of fear sits alongside a pronouncement that he must hide those fears is telling nonetheless. During this internal agitation he remained conscious of the need to uphold a veneer in front of his comrades, because despite the magnitude of what they were doing, hunger strikers were not immune to the pressures of the stoic and fearless Volunteer ideal.

To meet the requirements of that courageous soldierly role, a Volunteer also had to show an unhesitating acceptance of and readiness to participate in acts of violence. A man fighting for the republic was supposed to be comfortable with whatever was deemed necessary in the struggle against his British oppressors. Expressing an aversion to violence was akin to cowardice and could be taken as a sign of effeminacy or a lack of commitment to the cause.<sup>140</sup> Some men did, however, struggle to reconcile their wish for an Irish republic with the violence that being an active soldier necessitated. This was the case for the IRA's Seán Kennedy. Kennedy was involved in an ambush during the War of Independence that left a lorry driver dead and it was his first time seeing a dead body. In his memoir, he mused over the morality of the man's death:

Why had that poor lad, - a fellow human being, had to be killed? Was there no other way of obtaining our freedom?...Again, the fact that we were the legitimate army of the elected Government of Ireland, carried no weight, and I thought only of the poor

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p.115.

<sup>140</sup> In her study of 'shell-shocked' men in Britain and Ireland after the First World War, Joanna Bourke has noted that 'the abhorrence of violence' was assumed to be a form of effeminacy in this period (J. Bourke, 'Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Suffering of 'Shell-Shocked' Men in Great Britain and Ireland 1914-39', *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1 (2000), p.60).

dead lad, who had no doubt, a mother to mourn him, just as I had. I had some sleepless nights over this, but could tell nobody, as I would be laughed at, and told that it was war.<sup>141</sup>

Kennedy recognised that his aversion to the violence would have caused his comrades to call his soldierly credentials, and as such his manliness, into question. He was distressed, but to express that distress would betray the rules of the emotional regime. Republican soldiers were instructed to see every situation ‘with a soldier’s eye’, to have an ‘aggressive spirit’ and ‘not to find honourable ways of avoiding war, but to find favourable opportunities for fighting’.<sup>142</sup> Kennedy’s scepticism and questioning of IRA methods could have led to his commitment and his republicanism being interrogated. In this retrospective account, he is reflective and seemingly honest about his emotions in the period and the pressures upon him to conceal them. Of course, only a small number of Volunteers wrote memoirs, and an even smaller proportion departed from the heroic narrative and engaged with their feelings in these memoirs.<sup>143</sup> From what we know of the culture of masculinity, militarism and stoicism that marked the period, though, it is probable that Kennedy was not alone in his discomfort and decision to conceal it.

## Conclusion

Across the historiography of twentieth century warfare, it is common to assert that military authorities sought to quell the expression of emotion in order to avoid any

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<sup>141</sup> NLI MS 44,046/3, Copy of *They Loved Dear Old Ireland* by Seán Kennedy (Private publication, 1972).

<sup>142</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II no.1 (15 April 1919), p.1.

<sup>143</sup> The deaths of comrades also made Volunteers question whether the revolution and republican struggle was worth it. This was felt particularly acutely during the Civil War, which was characterised by more despondency than hope. Ernie O’Malley, recounting the death of Paddy O’Brien, wrote, ‘Here was dying the best of our men; would we ever find another like him. Was it worth all this seemingly eternal fighting? Ireland was an inspiration and a cue. Did we only realise universal sorrow when we bitterly felt our own?’ (*Singing Flame*, p.136).

impediment to the efficacy of their soldiers.<sup>144</sup> As this chapter has shown, the emotional regime and processes of emotion management in a military arena are in fact more nuanced than a simple negative correlation between emotional expression and military success. Certain emotional expressions may have been deemed a threat to victory, but they were also a threat to the successful exhibition of a vision of unwavering, heroic manliness. Expressions of fear and sadness in particular ultimately contravene notions of soldierly performance and identity. The figure of the soldier is the apogee of modern Western conceptions of masculinity and military sites act as microcosms of manliness. At this apex of masculine performance, the expression of 'feminine' or 'irrational' emotions becomes, in the majority of cases, especially aberrant. These broader notions, and their specific manifestation in Ireland in the years 1916-1923, contributed to a culture where emotions were regulated, and in turn men often chose to manage and conceal their feelings. As a revolutionary, republican, anti-colonial struggle marked by military and interpersonal conflict, this was an unavoidably emotional time. Nonetheless, when fulfilling the role of a republican fighter, a man's expression of feeling was expected to go only as far as pride in his country, anger at the enemy, passion for the fight, and pleasure in victory.

This chapter has revealed the power that republican ideals and norms of resolute and restrained manly comportment had on the emotional expressions of Irish Volunteers, as well as how they chose to write about those expressions in retrospect. Volunteers were bound by a conception of manhood, and military manhood in particular, that was unwaveringly courageous, cool and resilient. Any emotional expression that deviated

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<sup>144</sup> For example, Eyal Ben-Ari, in his study of emotion in an Israeli Military Unit, concluded that 'because emotions may impede the performance of military tasks they must be overcome, channelled, and above all controlled' (E. Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and the Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit* (Oxford, 1998), p.44).



from that image of manliness – particularly sadness and fear – was therefore proscribed. The emotional regime may have been largely successful in ensuring that such expressions were concealed, but it could not entirely control the conduct of the thousands of Irish Volunteers who engaged in revolutionary action. The next chapter will, therefore, explore moments when emotions were revealed despite masculine social codes and consider the ways that discourses of manliness shaped the means by which they were expressed physically, verbally and in writing.

## Chapter Four: Emotional Experience and Expression

Writing in my old age of the happenings of my early years I am conscious that my reactions to these happenings were based mainly on emotionalism and enthusiasm.

I rarely thought; I felt.<sup>1</sup>

Nationalism is an inherently emotional phenomenon, for it is based on an individual's emotional connection to the nation in abstract and to the nation's populace as an imagined community.<sup>2</sup> In anti-colonial nationalisms in particular, that emotional connection manifests as anger towards the nation's subordination and passion for its freedom and prosperity. The Irish revolutionaries of the early twentieth century were, therefore, engaged in inherently emotional acts. Moreover, for the young men of the Irish Volunteers, the act of fighting and suffering during the often intense and tumultuous years of revolution could involve acutely emotional moments ranging from devastating loss to exhilarating victory. As the last chapter illustrated, Volunteers were encouraged to maintain a level of emotional restraint no matter the magnitude of their experiences. Whilst the exhortations and wider rhetoric of emotional control were in many cases

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1979), p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin O'Shiel, Sinn Féin member and judge in the Dáil Courts, wrote in his witness statement that 'Nationalism is a human emotion largely, an irrational emotion, but its force is terrific...no [other] emotion is so capable of developing into pathological forms so difficult to contend with' (BMH WS 1770, p.67); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), p.141; J. Krauel, 'Emotions and Nationalism: The Case of Joan Maragell's Compassionate Love of Country' *Hispanic Research Journal* 15.3 (2014), p.191; P.C. Hogan, 'The sacrificial employment of national identity: Padraic Pearse and the 1916 Easter uprising', *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 5.1 (2014) p.26; J. Heaney, 'Emotions and Nationalism: A Reappraisal' in N. Demertzis (ed.), *Emotions in Politics: The Affect Dimension in Political Tension* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp.243-263; Heaney's chapter uses the formation of 'national habitus' in the Irish Free State as a case study and argues that the 'unified nationalist and religious narrative' of the nation was 'repressive and conservative, giving rise to an "emotional climate" characterized by guilt, shame and fear' but simultaneously 'produced high levels of solidarity and social cohesion' as 'identification with and "love for" the nation were central to individual's conception of selfhood and personal "identity"' (p.259); Matthew Kelly has noted the 'emotional resonance' of Fenianism in Ireland, which moderate nationalists who advocated for Home Rule was unable to contend with (See M. J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism* (Woodbridge, 2006), p.239.

effective in limiting emotional expression amongst the soldiers, the power yielded by the emotional regime was, by nature, limited.<sup>3</sup> A Volunteer's actions were not absolutely ruled by the fortitudinous manly ideal, but shaped and influenced by it. Moreover, certain moderate emotional expressions had always been permissible. The emotional regime did not, and indeed could not, impose a total censure of all emotional expressions in all circumstances. The overarching rhetoric may have been one of restraint but in reality, judgements about the acceptability or unacceptability of an emotional expression rested on discretion. Fear was the only emotion that was consistently irreconcilable with republican martial manliness. As this chapter will illustrate, the permissibility of other emotional expressions, like sadness, depended on their perceived origin and the context in which they were expressed. In letters, diaries and retrospective accounts, meanwhile, the individual expressing or recalling an emotion could frame that origin or context in order to conjure a desired impression and evoke a desired response. For instance, in a letter home from prison, a Volunteer may have written of their positive emotions in the face of adversity in order to reassure loved ones. In a memoir written after the revolution, they may recount their happiness in difficult circumstances in order to impress and to advance a romantic, heroic narrative of manly stoicism. On the other hand, they may refer to their sadness in order to construct a sentimental, sacrificial narrative and to illustrate the extent of their suffering at the hands of the British and therefore their fortitude and fidelity in having come out the other side. References to emotion may also, however, simply have been sincere attempts to accurately represent an experience or memory of that experience.

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<sup>3</sup> W. Reddy, 'Against Constructionism: The Historical Ethnography of Emotions', *Current Anthropology* 38.3 (1997), p.333.

This chapter will consider the emotional experience of Volunteering as it was expressed and described at the time and in retrospect. It will take account of emotional expressions that deviated from the emotional regime, emotional expressions that could in certain circumstances become permissible despite the regime, the reframing of emotional expression to maintain the manly narrative, and finally emotional expressions that could comply with and contribute to the performance of sacrificial martial manliness. It explores expressions of an individual's own present or past emotions, descriptions of emotions observed in others, and the impact they were intended to have. It considers these things in light of a culture of emotional restraint where the only consistently permissible emotional expressions were unostentatious, composed and the product of enthusiasm for the cause, good humour in the face of hardship, anger at injustice, pride in victory or care for one's comrades. Irish Volunteers were required to navigate the emotional intensity of their revolutionary experience through a restrictive formulation of what it meant to be a manly republican militant. The outcomes of that navigation are explored in the sections that follow.

### Conceptions and expressions of fear

Courage was an integral, if not the defining, component of the republican martial manly role. Fear was therefore the emotion most firmly at odds with being a Volunteer. Violence and risk of death in armed conflict of course generated fear amongst even the most hardened combatants, but ideals of soldierly comportment often ensured that fear was controlled, concealed and denied.<sup>4</sup> Many maintained the narrative of fearlessness well beyond 1923, but some contemporary and retrospective Volunteer accounts do provide

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<sup>4</sup> R. Peterson and E. Liaras, 'Countering Fear in War: The Strategic Use of Emotion', *Journal of Military Ethics* 5.4 (2006); J. Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London, 2005), p.200.

an insight into the part that the expression of fear played in the revolutionary experience. The last chapter noted the potential for men to become desensitised to the violence and trauma of active combat as the conflict of the War of Independence progressed. Accordingly, it was before and during their very first operations with an Active Service Unit or Flying Column that Volunteers were the most obviously nervous and frightened. Joost Augusteijn has noted the variety of ways that fear could manifest amongst the, often teenaged, inexperienced combatants: one Volunteer collapsed, some froze, some fired too early and some simply refused to carry on with their task.<sup>5</sup> It is harder to ascertain how their peers responded to such expressions and whether they were reproached or excused as beginner's anxiety. However, the pervasiveness of ideals of courage and resilience would suggest that beyond their first experiences of combat, such behaviours would be castigated and likely occasion dismissal.<sup>6</sup>

The pressures to maintain control and conceal emotions even within daunting situations in revolutionary life led to a particular kind of ambivalence and vacillation in Volunteers' thoughts about fear. The centrality of sacrificial discourses which dictated that a true republican would be glad to die for the cause meant that fear in the face of death was a particularly complicated emotion to contend with. Writing during the Civil War, Peadar O'Donnell was contemplative about fear and death whilst hunger striking:

I was not afraid to die. Death didn't hold any panic for me...I could be afraid of being killed. That seemed quite queer: 'I am not afraid to die: I can be afraid of being killed'.  
Was it a weakness in my courage? Courage – what was courage anyway? Anger, fear, love, hate – they all differed in their quality from courage: they are something

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<sup>5</sup> J. Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921* (Dublin, 1996), p.140-141.

<sup>6</sup> As was repeatedly made clear in editions of *An tÓglách* during the War of Independence, 'the triumph of the Republican cause depends upon the courage, energy and determination of the armed manhood of Ireland' (vo.II no.14 (1 July 1920), p.1); See pp.44-51 for more on the importance of courage to the Volunteer role.

whereas courage – was it anything but the absence of fear? One fears this and doesn't fear that: why was it that I didn't fear death yet found something to be feared in being killed.<sup>7</sup>

Republican men were persistently urged to be fearless in their endeavours or simply told that IRA soldiers *were* courageous, the inference being that if one displayed fear they were not a true or worthy republican soldier. Such assertions were at times applied to Irish people as a whole: one 1921 issue of *An tÓglách* stated that British 'terrorism' could not succeed 'against a brave and hardy race like the Irish', and another referred to the 'matchless courage of your race'.<sup>8</sup> It is unsurprising that such declarations would lead individuals to ponder or scrutinise the dimensions of their own courage and fear. O'Donnell later referenced Frank Gallagher's published prison diary from his time on hunger strike during the War of Independence and concluded, 'I'm sure Gallagher is much braver than I am, but he takes his brave moments fearfully whereas I must sit down until I can resolve my fears'.<sup>9</sup> Gallagher's diary documented days one to ten of a 1920 hunger strike.<sup>10</sup> In it, he meanders between feeling fearless and fearful but fear in general seem to be near constantly on his mind. His diary does, nonetheless, show similarities to O'Donnell's, for they both express ambivalence and anxiety regarding fear and death:

Though I know deep, deep in me that it is right and just and good for us to die, I cannot kill the fear of dying...Sometimes I am not sure which is deeper...the dread of dying or the sorrow of not dying...If the will could hold the imagination, keep the mind in

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<sup>7</sup> P. O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open: An Irish Civil War Prison Diary* (London, 1932), p.136-7.

<sup>8</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III no.13 (17 June 1921), p.1; *An tÓglách* vol.III, no.17 (16 July 1921), p.3; As discussed in Chapter One, colonial British stereotypes of the Irish had deemed them both effeminate and 'martial'. The latter was 'acceptable to all shades of nationalists' and appears to have influenced their own self-perceptions (T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery, 'An Irish Military Tradition?' in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> O'Donnell, *Gates Flew Open*, p.213.

<sup>10</sup> F. Gallagher, *Days of Fear: Diary of a 1920s Hunger Striker* (London, 1928).

subjection, crush out the million tiny fears and doubts and frightened impulses which swarm and swarm like ants over a corpse in the desert - then it would be easy...<sup>11</sup>

Gallagher's words denote a conflict between the discourses of the period and the messy realities of human emotion. The pervasive narrative of sacrifice was at the forefront of republican dogma at the time, and ultimately stipulated that a sacrificial death was righteous and not to be feared. Although Gallagher 'knew' this doctrine, it could not rid him of his fears when confronting death. No matter how much republican rhetoricians preached the value of sacrifice, it could not stop a Volunteer's emotions when confronted with his own mortality.

Whilst the sacrificial rhetoric could not purge men of their fears, the emotional regime could at least stop them expressing those fears to their comrades. Both O'Donnell's and Gallagher's contemplations were revealed in what were at the time private diaries, written three years apart. As noted in the last chapter, Gallagher wrote explicitly in his diary that he would not 'be afraid openly' so that 'the others' would not know.<sup>12</sup> O'Donnell, by contrast, described Mountjoy Jail in 1923 as 'an uncanny place in many ways...It was a dry, rare atmosphere in which we all saw one another clearly and nobody hid his fears and hopes'.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps this marks a difference between the earlier and later stages of the revolution: men were initially more prone to maintain an overt manliness regardless of their emotional state, but by 1923 those who remained in the fight were either so close or so weary that hiding their fears during a hunger strike was no longer a priority.

It was during the fight – on ambushes, raids, active engagement, or on the run – that fear was felt most acutely and also when it was particularly important to perform

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.125.

<sup>12</sup> Gallagher, *Days of Fear*, p.110.

<sup>13</sup> O'Donnell, *Gates Flew Open*, p.126.

fearlessness. Whilst some maintained the bravado of unwavering soldierly courage in their retrospective accounts and memoirs, others openly described their fright in various situations. Todd Andrews wrote that he had ‘plenty of anxieties’ during the War of Independence, and being on the run was a particular ‘strain on [his] nerves’ as the fear of arrest was ‘always present’.<sup>14</sup> Charlie Dalton, meanwhile, noted his struggle to maintain a manly composure before an early morning operation to attack British forces in 1920. He apparently noticed ‘a look of nervous tension’ appear on the faces of his comrades and personally ‘steemed’ himself for what was to come but as the minutes passed he found it hard to ‘check the restless feeling’ that came over him, thus acknowledging the distinction between his internal emotional state and the performance he was duty-bound to uphold.<sup>15</sup> Recounting the events of Bloody Sunday in the same year, a fellow Dublin Brigade member Matty McDonald told Ernie O’Malley that Dalton had been ‘very nervous’ beforehand, and that night he ‘kept awake in fright’, believing he could hear the ‘gurgling’ of the blood of the Officer he had killed.<sup>16</sup> It is notable that Dalton, in what is a detailed and, within its genre, comparatively emotion-laden memoir, does not tell of this experience himself. He instead wrote simply that ‘the sights and sounds of that morning were to be with me for many days and nights’.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps fear and distress of the intensity McDonald described remained too much for Dalton to admit or perhaps he still struggled to confront and deal with the emotional and psychological magnitude of that day even when writing later.<sup>18</sup> Either way, Dalton’s comrades were party to his intense fear and

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<sup>14</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.163.

<sup>15</sup> C. Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade (1917-1921)* (London, 1929), p.74.

<sup>16</sup> Matty McDonald’s interview with Ernie O’Malley quoted in J. Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance*, p.141; In Dalton’s application for a military pension, his former commandant Liam Tobin similarly wrote that ‘Dalton’s nervous system was badly impact [sic] by his duty on “Bloody Sunday”’ (Military Service Pensions, Liam Tobin to Advisory Committee (27 January 1956), available at: [http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF\\_Pensions/R1/24SP1153CHARLESFDALTON/1\\_27\\_56%20Charles%20F%20Dalton.pdf](http://mspcsearch.militaryarchives.ie/docs/files/PDF_Pensions/R1/24SP1153CHARLESFDALTON/1_27_56%20Charles%20F%20Dalton.pdf)).

<sup>17</sup> Dalton, *Dublin Brigade*, p.106.

<sup>18</sup> A. Dolan, ‘Killing and Bloody Sunday, November 1920’, *The Historical Journal* 49.3 (2006) pp.789-810.



turmoil but he made the decision to leave it out of his memoir. This is in contrast to Gallagher's concealment of fear in front of his comrades (discussed in the last chapter) but subsequent decision to publish his emotionally revealing diary in 1928 when ideals of IRA heroism and associated emotional restraint still held strong. Together, these examples demonstrate the ambiguity that could surround the contemporary expression and retrospective description of a Volunteer's emotional experience.

Ernie O'Malley's two memoirs are, by comparison with those of other former Volunteers, notably frank in their admission of intense fear during IRA service. He appeared to be at peace with the fact he experienced fear, writing that 'I knew fear, and nameless terror would dog me, hovering and threatening; cold spinal fear that went down to trembling hands'.<sup>19</sup> In his Civil War memoir, O'Malley described the physical manifestation of his fear during a raid on the house where he was staying. His heartbeats were 'so loud in the darkness' that he feared they must have been heard outside so he pressed his hand against his heart to keep it quiet, only to find 'it now seemed to be now on top of [his] tongue'.<sup>20</sup> Jim O'Donnell, on the other hand, presented his fear as an aberration from his usual manly fortitude, describing the moment a British soldier held to a gun to his back as the 'one time in my life that I felt real fear'.<sup>21</sup> It is hard to imagine that any Volunteer who saw active service was entirely fearless, or put on a good enough performance to appear entirely fearless, throughout the revolutionary period and yet this was the ideal they were expected to live up to. Fear was both the emotion most consistent with the violence of war yet the emotion most vehemently proscribed amongst soldiers and this duality could produce a variety of contemporary and retrospective depictions.

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<sup>19</sup> E. O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Dublin, 1936), p.234-5.

<sup>20</sup> E. O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin, 1978), p.182.

<sup>21</sup> NLI MS 44,046/2, J. O'Donnell, *Recollection based on the Diary of an Irish Volunteer 1898 to 1924* (1972).

### Navigating the loss of a comrade

In Catholic Ireland in the early twentieth century, death was accompanied by a host of rituals and beliefs which provided avenues for the management and expression of mourning.<sup>22</sup> But in the revolutionary context, where young men regularly died for the cause, sacrifice was considered sacred and Irish Volunteers were bound by a restrictive emotional regime, the expression of personal grief became more complicated. This section will consider how Volunteers responded to the death of a comrade or former comrade within the confines of an emotionally restrained masculine culture.

In the early hours of 8 December 1922, four prominent anti-Treaty IRA prisoners at Mountjoy Jail – Rory O’Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Dick Barrett – were told that they were to be executed that morning as a reprisal for the murder of TD Seán Hales. For their remaining comrades in Mountjoy, the news of the executions was extremely upsetting. Ernie O’Malley felt as if he had ‘again been wounded’: ‘the same swift disappearance of my innards, an icy chill where they had been, and a trembling in my legs’.<sup>23</sup> This description illustrates the intensity of his reaction, but it is formulated in physical terms and in military terms as analogous to when he was wounded in battle. This was, perhaps, the easiest way for a soldier well-versed in the ideals of stoic martial manliness to express his hurt. It is a notably masculine way of illustrating emotion, that still elucidates the magnitude of his response. When he heard the same news, Peadar O’Donnell ‘went wooden’, ‘completely dried of all feeling’.<sup>24</sup> Others report more typical, raw emotional responses to the four executions but still do so using language with some

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<sup>22</sup> T. Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford, 2015), pp.30-35; J. Kelly and M. A. Lyons (eds.), *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives* (Dublin, 2013); J. M. Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain 1870-1914* (Cambridge, 2005); A. Hepburn, ‘The Irish Way of Dying: “Ulysses” and Funeral Processions’, *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 38 (2014).

<sup>23</sup> O’Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.197.

<sup>24</sup> O’Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p.86.

physical connotations. Liam Deasy was 'shattered' by the news, which led him into a period of 'the greatest depression'.<sup>25</sup> Robert Brennan similarly described Seán Etchingham being a 'broken man', 'smashed' in particular by the death of Liam Mellows to whom he had been 'devoted'.<sup>26</sup> These descriptions demonstrate how much these men cared for their comrades but it is notable that they are euphemistic about their contemporary responses and do not mention tears. With the exception of Peadar O'Donnell's diary, the examples were all written in retrospect and can be read as attempts to convey the intensity of feeling when comrades were executed without describing the physical or verbal manifestations of their pain, which would constitute a significant departure from the narrative of restrained manly comportment: we are told about their feelings, but not how those feelings were revealed in the moment.

It is often argued in contemporary studies of masculinity and emotion that the only emotion consistently designated as masculine and therefore acceptable for men to express in public is anger.<sup>27</sup> Various emotions may therefore be channelled into and presented outwardly as rage. A recent analysis concluded that when it comes to bereavement, 'expressions of grief are deeply gendered, they are also powerfully policed and men who grieve in ways that do not embody socially assigned masculine practices (such as stoicism and rationality) can feel judged and alienated'.<sup>28</sup> The Volunteers did not face quite the same pressures of men later in the twentieth century but there was, of course, a clear demarcation in the expectations placed on men and women, and anger was the most permissible and anticipated male emotion. A Volunteer's grief could, therefore, be expressed as anger. Anti-Treaty Volunteer Jim O'Donnell recalled the

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<sup>25</sup> L. Deasy, *Brother Against Brother* (Dublin, 1982), p.93.

<sup>26</sup> BMH WS 779, Robert Brennan, p.128.

<sup>27</sup> P. Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity & Subjectivity In Modern Culture* (London, 1992), p.212.

<sup>28</sup> G. Creighton, J.L. Oliffe, S. Butterwick & E. Saewyc, 'After the death of a friend: Young men's grief and masculine identities', *Social Science & Medicine* 84 (2013), p.35.

aftermath of a fight in the Civil War, when he came across a body that he first thought was a Free State soldier, but then realised was Jim Moran, his friend and comrade that he had been separated from during the action:

As Jim was dressed in uniform, I thought it was one of the Free Staters who was killed until I recognised a scarf he was wearing. I then realised it was he and I suppose I just lost my head as I whirled my rifle twice around my head and threw it as far down the hill as I could.<sup>29</sup>

O'Donnell then describes the position, location and state of Moran's body in exceptional detail, noting that 'across the heather for about ten feet were scattered in lumps the size of a small hen egg the brains that had plotted and schemed, and for which he gave his young life'.<sup>30</sup> He describes Moran as a man who 'never knew fear', made good soldiers of those in his command, and that 'even in the toughest situations', would 'sing and crack a joke'.<sup>31</sup> O'Donnell's initial reaction seems marked by anger and disbelief, whilst his account of the incident evokes the discourse of sacrifice and his description of his dead friend relies on tropes of soldierly courage and stoicism. Yet, he does not mention any sadness at this undoubtedly traumatic incident. Moreover, in stating that his reaction was a result of having 'lost [his] head', O'Donnell plays into the notion that emotions were something a man ought to have mastery over. This traumatic moment engendered a loss of composure and a loss of control but still, if we are to trust his account, led only to a physical response of anger rather than any expression of sorrow. Later in the same account, O'Donnell recalled the following moment when the Free State soldier who had killed Moran arrived,

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<sup>29</sup> NLI MS 44,046/2, J. O'Donnell, *Recollection based on the Diary of an Irish Volunteer 1898 to 1924* (1972).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

The man who shot him came up, flung himself on his knees over him and said, "My God, Jim, that it should be my hand that took away your young life!" He wept as bitterly as if it were his own brother. That man was known to us as Lieutenant Hogan. He was in charge of the party which actually captured us.<sup>32</sup>

Though their situations were different, it is noteworthy that Hogan's response appears so markedly different from O'Donnell's. Of course, this is the only account we have of the incident and perhaps O'Donnell also wept but chose not to record it. But if his account is accurate then the fact that Hogan wept openly on the realisation that the enemy soldier he had killed was in fact his friend, presumably in front of the other Free State soldiers under his command, suggests a greater permissibility surrounding emotions in the Free State Army than in the IRA. As an officially recognised organisation with the backing of the majority of citizens, members of the newly established national army perhaps felt they had less to prove and were therefore less concerned about projecting an image of unfaltering manly fortitude. Hogan's experience was of course particularly traumatic for he had been responsible for the death of his friend but it is nonetheless notable how far it contrasts with the pattern of silence and emotional concealment amongst anti-Treaty men when they heard that a friend who supported the Free State had died, which was discussed in the last chapter.

The loss of a friend across the Treaty divide required the especially difficult negotiation of military and political allegiance with personal loss. In the messiness of a conflict of 'brother against brother', the way that a man should respond to such an event was ill-defined. In the earlier period, there were easily identifiable patterns to how Volunteers behaved in the face of grief but the Civil War saw much more variety in how

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

different men responded to the same event. That variety becomes especially clear in the divergent responses of IRA members to the death of Michael Collins. The appropriate response to the loss of a man who was the leader of the enemy forces, but also the man who was perhaps more instrumental than any other in the successes of the War of Independence, was far from clear-cut. For some, it was a moment for celebration: Ernie O'Malley recounted that 'many republican were in high spirits' after Collins and Arthur Griffith died in quick succession whilst Frank O'Connor recalled the moment two joyful men burst into the room with the news, to which he and his companion also rejoiced.<sup>33</sup> Erskine Childers was also there with O'Connor but showed no signs of joy and instead 'slunk away to his table silently, lit a cigarette and wrote a leading article in praise of Collins'.<sup>34</sup> Tom Barry described the remarkable response of republican prisoners in Mountjoy jail when they heard the news:

There was a heavy silence throughout the jail, and ten minutes later from the corridor outside the top tier of cells I looked down on the extraordinary spectacle of about a thousand kneeling Republican prisoners spontaneously reciting the Rosary aloud for the repose of the soul of the dead Michael Collins, President of the Free State Executive Council and Commander-in-Chief of the Free State forces. There was, of course, little logic in such an action, but I have yet to learn of a better tribute to the part played by any man in the struggle with the English for Irish independence.<sup>35</sup>

Barry acknowledged the strangeness of this response; that this man was their professed enemy and his death spelled a military victory, yet they engaged in this collective display of respect for him. Reciting the rosary was of course a highly familiar ritual for Irish

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<sup>33</sup> O'Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.152; F. O'Connor, *An Only Child* (London, 1961), p.232.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> T. Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Cork, 1949), p.295.

Catholics, and perhaps collectively turning to a formalised tradition was a means to cope with a complex situation where there was likely to be a divergence in individuals' emotions. The ambiguity of the moment could be channelled into a pre-defined ritual performance that conveyed emotional sentiment but did not require any interrogation of personal feeling. Expressions of grief for Collins among anti-Treaty men were admitted privately too; Austin Stack wrote in a letter to Joseph McGarrity that he was 'heartbroken' at the 'regrettable end of our old friend Mick' who 'did great work for Ireland up to the Truce, no man more'.<sup>36</sup> There was no script for how to respond to such an incident. In the War of Independence, norms of soldierly comportment, emotional expression and brotherly camaraderie had clearly influenced Volunteer behaviour and responses, but everything was destabilised by a Civil War that no Volunteer could have anticipated before December 1921.

The entrenched discourses of sacrifice did, however, complicate and shape expressions of grief throughout the whole revolutionary period. Volunteers were consistently exposed to pronouncements that to die whilst fighting for independence was a positive, sacred and joyous thing: in the infamous words of Patrick Pearse, 'life springs from death and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations'.<sup>37</sup> To meet the requirements of this discourse whilst navigating personal feelings of loss often led to descriptions of a duality of feeling. In the language used by Volunteers at least, personal mourning could be accompanied by joy that the cause had gained another martyr and was therefore brought a step forward. During his toast as best man at the wedding of Kevin O'Higgins, Rory O'Connor spoke of the martyred leaders of the Easter

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<sup>36</sup> NLI MS 17,489/4, Letter from Austin Stack to Joseph McGarrity regarding the death of Michael Collins (27 August 1922).

<sup>37</sup> P. Pearse, 'Graveside Panegyric' (1 August 1915) in P. Pearse, *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork, 2012), p.112.

Rising: 'our sorrow is tempered and transcended by our pride and by our realisation of the glorious recompense their death had brought them'.<sup>38</sup> Others wrote of their 'joy and sorrow' and their 'sadness and pride' regarding the executions of the 1916 leaders.<sup>39</sup> This duality came to the fore in particular when a successful military operation had also involved the death of comrades. For example after the Crossbarry ambush in March 1921, the West Cork IRA brigade apparently experienced a 'strange mixture' of emotion for they were 'jubilant at their success, but sorrowful for their dead comrades'.<sup>40</sup> Whilst it was, of course, possible to have mixed emotions, these examples appear more about transmitting republican ideals than depicting genuine feeling. By combining their sadness at the loss of a comrade with their happiness that the cause had more martyrs or had completed a successful military operation, a Volunteer could play into some of the most essential tenets of Irish republican manliness: meaningful brotherhood, the virtue and profitability of martyrdom, and devotion to the cause above all else. Indeed, despite the broader endorsement of emotional control, the expression or description of particular emotions in particular contexts could constitute part of the masculine script.

### Tears and the management of sadness

As the somatic, involuntary response to intense feelings of sadness, anger or happiness, crying occupies an especially complex place in strict emotional regimes. Tears are the most recognisable non-verbal manifestation of human emotion and are, of course, harder to control than verbal emotives. For Irish Volunteers, tears of sadness generally signified

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<sup>38</sup> UCDA P197/248, Toast given at Kevin O'Higgins' wedding by his best man, Rory O'Connor (27 October 1921).

<sup>39</sup> Letter from Fr. E.F. Murnane to George Gavan Duffy (2 August 1916), S. Schreibman (ed.) *Letters of 1916* (Maynooth University, 2016); BMH WS 755, Seán Prendergast, p.168.

<sup>40</sup> T. Kelleher, 'Route of the British at Crossbarry' in B. Ó Conchubhair (series ed.), *Rebel Cork's Fighting Story 1916-1921: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.162.



a crack in the manly, stoic veneer. The image of a weeping soldier deviated from the resolute heroic ideal that Volunteers were expected to live up to. Therefore, when a soldier's tears were described or admitted to in contemporary and retrospective accounts they were often carefully framed in order to ensure the crying man's masculine credentials were not called into question. As will be discussed later in this section, however, the sobbing Volunteer could also provide an emotive image that captured and conveyed the poignancy and magnitude of a particular moment.

Though it was written some 70 years before the revolutionary period, a passage from John Mitchel's 1854 *Jail Journal* provides a distillation of the strategies employed to preserve masculine status in written accounts of a man crying. Mitchel's journal was written during the years he spent on prison hulks after his conviction and deportation for treason in 1848 and, once published, became a staple read for Irish nationalists thereafter. Its popularity was such that it is fair to assume that a majority of the Volunteers would have been familiar with its pages.<sup>41</sup> The following is Mitchel's account of his first moments locked alone in a cell,

And now – as this is to be a faithful record of whatsoever befalls me, – I do confess, and will write down the confession, that I flung myself on the bed, and broke into a raging passion of tears – tears bitter and salt [sic] – tears of wrath, pity, regret, remorse – but not of base lamentation for my own fate. The thoughts and feelings that have so shaken me for this once, language was never made to describe; but if any austere censor could find it in his heart to vilipend my manhood therefor, I would advise him to wait until he finds himself in a somewhat similar position. Believe me,

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<sup>41</sup> Prison memoirs were, more broadly, a highly popular genre of literature within Irish nationalist culture. See W. Murphy, 'Narratives of Confinement: Fenians, Prisoner and Writing, 1867-1916' in F. McGarry and J. McConnel (eds.), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), pp.160-176.

oh Stoic! If your soul were in my soul's stead, I also could heap up words against you,  
and shake mine head at you.<sup>42</sup>

First, he 'confesses' that he wept. Then he pre-empts the fact that his tears will lead others to call his manliness into question and uses the extraordinary nature of his situation to justify his outburst. These are clear indications of a culture of masculinity where crying, and sorrow in general, were not acceptable. Immediately following this passage, Mitchel clarifies that this moment of emotional release only lasted half an hour, and then 'all weakness [was] past': 'I am ready for my fourteen years' ordeal, and for whatsoever the same may bring me – toil, sickness, ignominy, death'.<sup>43</sup> This quick restoration of his defiant, masculine self is suggestive of a wider understanding of men's emotions. They are let out profusely in a moment of extremity before being conquered by the masculine will, reeled back in and the stoic performance restored; they are an unfortunate but unavoidable short interlude in an otherwise unflappable performance. These patterns in Mitchel's narrative are congruent with many accounts of men crying during the revolutionary period.

After hearing the news that Michael Collins had died in 1922, an unnamed Free State soldier from Cork wrote the following to a friend in Dublin,

Our Mick dead, of whom no Gael could even speak, except adoringly!...I can't write any more, Tom. This paper is swimming before my eyes. Strong, brave lads all round [sic] me are sobbing like kids. Lads who faced death a score of times; pals of yours and mine who bared unflinchingly for the surgeon's knife – all of them crushed by the nightmare vision of our Mick, with a mortal hole in his dark head lying on the silent wayside.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> J. Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (London, 1854), p.28.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.29.

<sup>44</sup> NLI MS 44,687/4, Letter from unnamed 'Guardsmen from Cork' to a friend (1922) quoted in E. Dalton, 'An Appreciation of Michael Collins' [undated].

In describing their tears, he clarifies that his comrades are 'strong' and 'brave', and simultaneously uses the fact that such masculine men had been reduced to tears to explicate precisely *how* sad this moment was; they had not cried at all the horrors they had faced in the preceding years, but they were 'crushed' by Collins's death. There are a number of similar examples. In his account of being told that Collins had died, Batt O'Connor wrote, 'I have the picture forever in my mind of those two fearless men standing beside my bed, their eyes streaming with tears'.<sup>45</sup> Simply the insertion of the word 'fearless' here asserts the manliness of the crying men. Similarly, in reference to the funeral of Cathal Brugha in 1922, Sceilg (J.J. O'Kelly) described 'the remains being placed in their coffin amid the sobbing of strong men'.<sup>46</sup> Henry O'Mara, meanwhile, recounted the 1920 funeral of brothers Pat and Harry Loughnane of Galway who had been tortured, killed and their bodies burnt at the hands of British Auxiliaries. As the priest detailed their murder, 'tears filled the eyes of strong men and frail women alike'.<sup>47</sup> 'Strong men' and 'frail women' are presented as two ends of a spectrum from least to most likely to shed tears, and again the tears of those deemed the most resilient are used to illustrate the magnitude of the incident. In his description of the Loughnane brothers' funeral, Pádraig Ó Fathaigh similarly wrote that 'strong men sobbed aloud, and women wailed piteously'.<sup>48</sup> The display of emotion was an important aspect of the wider rituals of the Irish Catholic funeral, and when those funerals were also imbued with themes of martyrdom, the tears of strong, manly men who usually displayed a stoic comportment became not only permissible but a welcome reflection of the mood of the event.<sup>49</sup> The

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<sup>45</sup> B. O'Connor, *With Michael Collins in the Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 1929), p.189.

<sup>46</sup> UCDA P140/3618, Sceilg (J.J. O'Kelly), 'Cathal Brugha – As I Knew Him', *The Catholic Bulletin* (1922).

<sup>47</sup> BMH WS 162 Henry O'Mara, p.12.

<sup>48</sup> BMH WS 1517 Pádraig Ó Fathaigh, p.7.

<sup>49</sup> Irish Catholic mourning rituals had been marked by the profusion of weeping for centuries (See Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, pp.30-35 for a discussion of these rituals and the way they were perceived and depicted by English observers); It was partly the religious nature of funerals that made male tears more

‘frail women’ who ‘wailed piteously’, meanwhile, represented the traditional ‘keening’ practice that had long been a feature of Irish mourning processes.<sup>50</sup> In these witness statements, the description of powerful young men weeping alongside older women functions as a device that fits within the normative republican narrative: the men’s tears fall alongside those of women who symbolise Gaelic tradition, in a space far from the battlefield that was designated for grief, are more significant for the fact that they contrast so starkly with their usual performance of fortitude, and can be taken to indicate loving brotherhood, passion for the cause, and collusion in the production of martyrdom.

The trend of declaring the strength and courage of a weeping individual applied to grief more broadly, and particularly grief for fallen comrades. Michael Lynch described arriving at the house of Tom Keogh shortly after their mutual friend Martin Savage had been killed: ‘I saw him (one of the bravest men I ever met) with shoulders bowed over the table, weeping for his comrade and friend’.<sup>51</sup> Here, Lynch is very explicitly establishing Keogh’s manliness before writing that he wept. This is another indication that men were concerned with maintaining the masculine appearances of their comrades, or perhaps more accurately of the collective, as well as their own. In his witness statement, Seán Prendergast provides an example that follows this linguistic pattern, but is different in terms of context. Recounting the moment when the men of Knutsford Jail in 1916 were first allowed to attend Mass together after a stint of solitary confinement, Prendergast described how he and his comrades ‘gave full vent’ to their feelings in the rousing hymn ‘Faith of our Fathers’ and ‘many a tear stood in the eyes of these hard boiled

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permissible (See M. Raphael, ‘Gender’ in J. Corrigan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Emotion* (Oxford, 2008), p.192).

<sup>50</sup> Keening was a form of lament carried out at funerals in which Irish women wept, wailed and spoke ‘a series of breathless utterances of rhymed, rhythmic praise of the dead person (usually a man), and invective against his enemies’ (A Bourke, ‘The Irish Traditional Lament and the Grieving Process’, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 11.4 (1988), p.287); Dixon, *Weeping Britannia*, p.31).

<sup>51</sup> NLI MS 22,117 (i), Statement of Michael Lynch (2 November 1935).

rebels, these felons of our land'.<sup>52</sup> Prendergast's witness statement is littered with clichéd language of this nature and indeed the crying of 'tough men' became a commonplace cliché across retrospective accounts, used to symbolise the emotional significance of an event without going into detail or undermining masculine stoicism.

In each of the above examples the inference is that the men's tears were an aberration from their usual and quintessential manly stoicism which would shortly be restored, but in some cases the fleeting and divergent nature of the incident was made explicit.<sup>53</sup> According to Sceilg, when Éamonn Ceannt found Cathal Brugha seriously injured during the Easter Rising, he 'embraced him [and] pressed him to his heart in [the] passion of affection and tenderness'. Then, 'the fond eyes of the commandant were flooded with tears. But, in a moment, the soldier-spirit asserted itself, and he was himself again'.<sup>54</sup> In the same vein as in John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, the tears are presented as an outburst only and not indicative of his manly character. Sceilg implies that when expressing emotion Ceannt was not 'himself' but when subscribing to ideals of stoic soldiering manliness, he was. This is an interesting reversal of what would commonly be thought of as the front and back stage of one's identity, and of the common understanding of the civilian/soldier duality whereby the true 'self' is subsumed into the regimented and uniform soldierly role. This notion that a man was not his 'true' self when weeping was also presented in instances where tears were depicted either as something new or as a relic from childhood, rather than an element of the masculine adult psyche. Joe Good wrote that one day in Knutsford prison he 'got a shock' and found something he had 'lost

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<sup>52</sup> BMH WS 755, Seán Prendergast, p.163.

<sup>53</sup> Emmet Dalton presented Michael Collins's displays of negative emotion in these terms, writing that he 'drooped badly' when Kevin Barry was executed in 1920 and 'lapsed again' when an attempt to rescue Seán MacEoin from prison failed (NLI MS 46,687/4, E. Dalton, 'An Appreciation of Michael Collins' [undated]).

<sup>54</sup> Sceilg (J.J. O'Kelly), 'The South Dublin Union (The 1916 Rising)' (undated) in B. Ó Conchubhair, *Dublin's Fighting Story 1916-21: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.76.

as a child...Or, perhaps, began to find something again that I had never known I'd previously possessed or yearned for'.<sup>55</sup> The internees had got their first visitors that day, and Good found that his 'eyes were wet'.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, when Louis J. Walsh was imprisoned in Derry Jail on Christmas Day 1920, he found himself reminiscing about Christmases spent at home: 'Though I thought that the fountain of tears had long since dried up within me, I found that a few stray drops had risen to my eyelids'.<sup>57</sup> Again, by iterating that it had been so long since they cried, the men affirm their usual masculine stoicism whilst simultaneously emphasising the enormity of their experiences.

This recurrent pattern of men presenting tears alongside affirmations of manliness was a strategy employed to maintain the appearance of masculinity that the IRA had cultivated for itself, whilst also presenting a sentimental narrative of brotherhood and sacrifice. However, not everyone followed suit and one significant outlier is worthy of discussion here. When Paddy McCarthy died during an IRA operation, the men of his battalion had to carry his body back to their base. Kennedy observed that 'there were no hard or tough men in the Column that night, as they all cried like babies'.<sup>58</sup> Kennedy's words stand out for the fact that they do not affirm the masculinity of the crying men and instead explicitly state that they ceased to be 'hard or tough' because of their tears. He in fact subscribes to the hegemonic, stereotypical understanding of tears and masculinity in this period: that shedding tears is not what 'tough men' do. He plays into the language of manliness by denoting tears as signifiers of weakness and fragility, the opposite of hardness and toughness. However, in applying these associations and oppositions to his own comrades in arms, his words depart markedly from the typical

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<sup>55</sup> J. Good, *Enchanted by Dreams: The Journal of a Revolutionary* (Kerry, 1996), p.84.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> L. J. Walsh, "On My Keeping" And In Theirs: A Record of Experiences "On The Run" In Derry Gaol, And In Ballykinlar Internment Camp (Dublin, 1921), p.35.

<sup>58</sup> NLI MS 44,046/3, Copy of *They Loved Dear Old Ireland* by Seán Kennedy (Private Publication, 1972).

military memoir. Writing over fifty years after the event, Kennedy perhaps did not feel duty bound to protect the masculine stature of his former comrades and instead described the situation as he saw it. His description also points to the limits of the emotional regime: no matter the frequency of instructions from GHQ telling the IRA to remain stolid and stoic, tears could still be shed without qualification in response to the death of a close friend.

In all these cases, tears were shed in private, off-duty, in the aftermath of an engagement or during ritualised moments of collective emotion. To weep 'on the job' was different: it was during their active service, appearing in public, representing the organisation, and facing the enemy that tears were the most inimical to an army's masculine image. It was, of course, when carrying out military duties that a soldier was most conscious of his composed manly comportment. Therefore, it was a notable thing for a rank-and-file soldier to cry whilst carrying out an operation. In his recollections of his involvement in the IRA in Monaghan, Charles O'Neill tells the story of Kate Carroll, a woman who 'made poteen and talked a bit' and sold her produce to 'soldiers and anyone who would buy it'.<sup>59</sup> After being seen near the British barracks, she was suspected of being an informer and then condemned to death by a secret court martial. The majority of those in the community and in the IRA believed she was not guilty, including 'a lot' of the seven men sent to execute her: 'Most of the seven cried the whole way out to the Mountain where Kate Carroll died'.<sup>60</sup> Social pressures, instructions from seniors, and a sense of duty converged to create an emotive scene of men weeping whilst carrying out

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<sup>59</sup> NLI MS 44/046/5, Recollections of Charles O'Neill of his involvement in IRA activities in Scotstown, County Monaghan, 1919-1923, collected by his daughter [undated]; For more on the Kate Carroll case see D. Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923* (London, 2015), p.209 and A. Dolan, 'Ending war in a "sportsmanlike manner": the milestone of revolution', in T. Hachey, *Turning Points in twentieth-century Irish history* (Dublin, 2011), pp.21-38.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

their instructions.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, their tears reinforced the divergence between the men's performed role of a soldier obeying orders and their position as independent individuals who disagreed with the decision. Similar scenes were produced during the formal executions of the Civil War, where Free State soldiers took part in the firing squads that killed fellow Irishmen. Bill Baily of the Free State Army in the Civil War described to Ernie O'Malley the execution of some anti-Treaty IRA men in Kerry where, 'most of the firing squad [was] young and most of them crying'.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, a Protestant Dean present at the execution of Erskine Childers noticed that members of the firing squad were 'furtively wiping away tears when the word of command was given'.<sup>63</sup> In each of these cases, the crying men were paid members of the professional Free State Army so were obliged to meet the requirements of their job. In her book on the commemoration of the Civil War, Anne Dolan quoted a letter written by a former Free State soldier to a former Free State senator 47 years after the conflict had ended. The soldier lamented the fact that no regard was paid to the 'human emotion' of those who carried out the executions.<sup>64</sup> He wrote, 'it is impossible to describe the harrowing and the anguish of the soul, of having to see one time comrades in arms brought out and shot to death by a firing squad'.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, a soldier's emotions could stem from what they did as much as what was done to them. In each of these instances, the men's tears betray that they were not resolute and not comfortable with what they were charged with doing in the service of their army, whether it was the Irish Republican or the Free State army. It is significant that in each of

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<sup>61</sup> E. O'Halpin, 'Problematic killing during the War of Independence and its aftermath: Civilian spies and informers' in J. Kelly and M.A. Lyons (eds.), *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives* (Kildare, 2013), p.324.

<sup>62</sup> C.H. O'Malley and T. Horgan (eds.), *The Men Will Talk to Me: Kerry Interviews with Ernie O'Malley* (Cork, 2012), p.106.

<sup>63</sup> A. Boyle, *The Riddle of Erskine Childers* (London, 1977), p.25.

<sup>64</sup> A. Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003), p1.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*



these instances men cried together – it was not one man letting the side down but a silent, group expression of emotion. Perhaps they set each other off, or perhaps when one cried the others felt able to release their tears too; it was easier to transgress the rules of the emotional regime as a group than to stand out as an exception. None of these accounts, however, overtly disapprove of the men's tears so perhaps there was an unsaid acceptance of weeping in such difficult circumstances. This does not change the fact that fortitude was the ideal in all situations and indeed, in the Childers case at least, the men had sought to conceal their tears.<sup>66</sup>

It may have been more permissible to cry in some circumstances than others but still, it was better to maintain imperturbability. It was, therefore, notable for a Volunteer to weep unreservedly without attempting to hide his tears. In a contemporary report on the death of Michael Collins in 1922, General Emmet Dalton who had witnessed the shooting was described as being 'much distressed and openly weeping' whilst ministering to the 'already dead Collins' who had been shot through the head.<sup>67</sup> Dalton had just seen his friend shot and killed, and one may conclude that anything *other* than weeping openly would be strange but the fact that he wept without attempting to conceal it is considered noteworthy. The inference is that in most cases, if a man wept he would attempt to hide it. The same term was used in a witness statement account of the surrender at Jacob's Factory during the Easter Rising: Éamon Price witnessed 'men, old in the movement, seeing their dearest hopes dashed to the ground, [become] hysterical, weeping openly, breaking their rifles against the walls'.<sup>68</sup> The inclusion of 'openly' again suggests that tears would ordinarily be hidden, and therefore that these were especially

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<sup>66</sup> Knowing what we do about the pressures of manliness for soldiers at this time, we can fairly assume that men in the other cases had also tried, and failed, to conceal the fact that they were weeping.

<sup>67</sup> NLI MS 44,102/5, Typescript report on the death of Michael Collins [undated].

<sup>68</sup> BMH WS 995, Éamon Price, p.2.

agonising experiences where the usual rules of masculine emotional restraint were temporarily negated.

Whether or not a man's tears were considered a permissible anomaly in exceptional circumstances or a transgressive deviation from the masculine norm was dependent on their cause. The men that Price described were weeping because they were no longer able to keep up the fight: their tears could be taken as symbols of their passion for the cause and their desire to fight and potentially die for it. They were, therefore, not incompatible with the performance of republican martial manliness and there was no need to affirm the masculinity and typical stoicism of the crying individuals. Seosamh de Brun was another former Volunteer that described the emotional scenes of the Easter Rising surrender:

'...[Thomas] McDonagh [sic] broke down and sobbed bitterly as did many of the officers and men...There were loud cries of dissent among the men against the surrender. Many were crying fiercely and shouting, "Fight it out!"...I was with Commandant Hunter after the parade broke up. He also wept bitterly with disappointment at the end of the struggle'.<sup>69</sup>

De Brun's description differs notably from the descriptions quoted earlier of men weeping due to the death of a comrade. Grief is typically a far more familiar cause of tears than military surrender but in the revolutionary atmosphere where ideals of heroic masculine stoicism held sway, the latter was a more acceptable reason to cry than the former. There was no need for Price or de Brun to state that these were courageous men shedding tears, because the tears themselves signify that courage as well as their commitment to the cause. There were similar displays of emotion from those Volunteers outside of Dublin who were not able to join the Rising. Seán O'Neill was a member of the

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<sup>69</sup> BMH WS 312, Seosamh de Brun, p.18.

Mountbellew Volunteers in Galway who were disbanded by their Commandant due to communication issues arising from Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order and a lack of guns:

'...we of Mountbellew, who were disbanded by Hevearty, did so with a heavy heart and an occasional tear drop. We were sad, not because we were ordered to disband but, because force of circumstances prevented us from being in the thick of it and to help our gallant comrades in Dublin. I knew the spirit of the times and, without any undue stress to paint anything but a true picture, I wept and felt a choking feeling in my heart which prevented me from speaking audibly. Many of us felt we'd rather face the bullets unarmed in trying to do something than to stand there helplessly while brave men were fighting and dying in Dublin'.<sup>70</sup>

O'Neill provides a clear reason for the Volunteers' sadness, which again is one that complies with the ideal of the Volunteer striving by any means to play his part in the struggle. Each of these men were denied the opportunity to fight, or keep fighting, because of instructions from seniors and circumstances beyond their control. In the War of Independence, however, if an active Volunteer was denied the opportunity to fight it was because he was not chosen by his superiors for an operation. In 1920, Volunteer Seán Flood of the Dublin Brigade was not called forward to take part in a raid. His comrade Seán Prendergast described Flood's response as follows,

He was naturally beside himself with anger and disappointment. He fought the issue with the Brigadier and Vice Brigadier. "Why am I left out? Why can't I go on the job?", he argued, pleaded, raged with all the force at his command. It was a sad heart-rending sight to see him, tears in his eyes and showing signs of extreme distress and embarrassment...To those of us who knew his invaluable worth and his sterling

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<sup>70</sup> BMH WS 1219, Seán O'Neill, p.40.

qualities, who appreciated the fact that he was eager bent on taking his part with the other participants, the deprivation occasioned acute sorrow and genuine hardship.<sup>71</sup>

Prendergast does not present Flood's emotional outburst as unwarranted or deviant. Rather, he expresses sympathy and understanding for his situation. It appears that when it came to such matters, the usual rules of emotional control and restraint did not apply. If such a theatrical emotional reaction had been the product of tendencies deemed unmanly, for example fear or missing family members, it surely would not have been received, nor retrospectively presented, in the same way that these examples are. The way that an emotional expression was understood was, therefore, heavily contingent on the context in which it was expressed and the occurrence that provoked it.

### Performing contentment

The emotional regime of the Irish Volunteers may have primarily fostered emotional restraint and control, but certain emotional expressions could, in the right circumstances, contribute to the construction of manliness. Specifically, happiness and contentment could be deployed as a valuable resource in the enactment of sacrificial stoicism. To profess and display joy in the face of death or suffering was a declaration of righteous martyrdom and of manly character. The last letters of Volunteers facing execution from 1916 onwards are, accordingly, littered with pronouncements of happiness and contentment. Patrick Pearse, who most fervently propounded the ideals of masculine sacrifice, wrote in a letter to his Mother before his execution: 'We are ready to die and we shall die cheerfully and proudly'.<sup>72</sup> His fellow proclamation signatory Seán MacDiarmada wrote to his siblings that he felt happiness unlike he had ever felt before on the eve of his

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<sup>71</sup> BMH WS 755 Prendergast, p.377-8.

<sup>72</sup> P. Pearse to his mother Margaret (1 May 1916) [available at: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Patrick\\_Pearse%E2%80%9999\\_Letter\\_to\\_his\\_Mother,\\_1\\_May,\\_1916](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Patrick_Pearse%E2%80%9999_Letter_to_his_Mother,_1_May,_1916)].

execution, adding that he felt particular happy 'for the fact that Ireland has produced such men'.<sup>73</sup> The 1916 martyrs were celebrated for their apparent happiness to die for Ireland, and provided a model for their successors in the War of Independence to emulate. During the truce of 1921, a contributor to *An tÓglách* praised the fact that Volunteers had 'fought so gallantly and faced death and suffering so cheerfully' in the preceding years.<sup>74</sup> By the time of the Civil War then, republicans facing execution were well-versed in the appropriate tropes of a republican last letter ahead of execution. Reginald Dunne wrote that he was 'feeling very well and happy', Liam Mellows wrote, 'I die happy', Daniel Enright asserted 'I could never be so happy as I am now' and Erskine Childers proclaimed he was 'the happiest of men'.<sup>75</sup> Each of these men, and many more, were professing that they were not scared or sad to die in what was formulated as a blood sacrifice for the benefit of the nation. This was of course a declaration of their absolute commitment to the Irish republican ideal, but it was also a declaration of their resolution, stoicism and manliness. Though they were addressed to family members and loved ones, these letters were valuable pieces of republican propaganda. The men writing them were well aware that by leaving behind such statements they 'facilitated' the posthumous articulation of their personal martyrdom and the wider righteousness of the cause.<sup>76</sup> The letters were ostensibly private expressions of feeling and they were indeed genuinely comforting for loved ones, but they were also written for posterity and absorbed into republicanism's collective public performance of manly virtue.

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<sup>73</sup> NLI MS 41,479/9/3, Seán MacDiarmada to his brothers and sisters on the eve of his execution in Kilmainham Prison (11 May 1916).

<sup>74</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no.25 (9 September 1921), p.1.

<sup>75</sup> NLI MS 44,055/4, Copy of last letter of Reginald Dunne (9 August 1922); NLI MS 17,628/15, Copy letter from Liam Mellows to his Mother on the morning of his execution (8 December 1922); NLI MS 15,443, Copy of last letter of Daniel Enright (14 March 1923); E. Childers quoted in Boyle, *The Riddle of Erskine Childers*, p.13.

<sup>76</sup> J. Wolfe, 'The Mutation of Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland c.1850-2005' in J. Kelly and M.A. Lyons (eds.), *Death and Dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: Historical Perspectives* (Kildare, 2013), p.350.

The letters sent from ordinary republican prisoners not facing execution to friends and family members on the outside could similarly possess this dual function of comforting their kin whilst bolstering the wider republican image of stoic manliness. Such letters often included sentences reassuring their loved ones that they were doing well and in high spirits. Whilst this did reassure their recipients, such pronouncements were also sometimes shared publicly as affirmations that the republican collective were unbroken by hardship and willingly endured suffering without complaint because of their resolute commitment to the independence struggle.<sup>77</sup> After the wave of arrests that followed the 1916 Rising, families and friends were especially concerned as their sons, husbands, brothers and friends were taken away for the first time. The letters home of Tomas Malone from a number of prisons and internment camps in 1916 provide examples that are indicative of a wider trend, and they were marked by continual reassurances that he and his comrades were ‘very well’ and ‘happy’.<sup>78</sup> A letter written by Mort O’Connell whilst interned at Frongoch in the same year to his friend and fellow republican James Ryan summarised that ‘it would take the devil himself to make us downhearted’.<sup>79</sup> During the Civil War, meanwhile, Liam Mellows wrote to his mother that he was ‘first class in every way & want[ing] for nothing’.<sup>80</sup> An interesting archival document from the same period lists a great many extracts all taken from the letters home of imprisoned anti-Treaty IRA men in the Autumn of 1922. Seemingly compiled by Free State forces as evidence of their good treatment of the prisoners, the quotes are all very similar: Seán Horgan wrote on 19 October 1922 that he was ‘having a good time with

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<sup>77</sup> This was the image of prisons presented to readers of *An tÓglách*. See *An tÓglách* vol.I no.10 (1 February 1919), p.1; vol.II no.9 (15 April 1920, p.4); and vol.II no.20 (1 October 1920), p.4 for examples.

<sup>78</sup> NLI MS 44,038/2, Letters from Tomas Malone at Richmond Barracks, Wandsworth Prison, and Frongoch internment camp to his mother and sister.

<sup>79</sup> UCDA P88/37, Letter from Mort O’Connell in Frongoch Internment Camp to James Ryan (1916).

<sup>80</sup> NLI MS 44,829, Letter from Liam Mellows to his Mother (16 November 1922).

all the boys'; the next day, Domnhall O'Grianna wrote that 'prison life has its rays of sunshine just like other walks of life, and apart from the fact that we are prisoners there is nothing else to throw gloom over our existence'; a week later, Fred Greene wrote that he was 'very comfortable' in prison and if only he had 'a few good books', he would not care if he never got out.<sup>81</sup> Other prisoners wrote of the good food, amenities, conditions and treatment that they received.<sup>82</sup> The key difference between last letters before execution and reassuring letters home lies in intention: the latter may also have been useful for propaganda when made public but they were first and foremost for private viewing to let their families know they were doing well despite the circumstances, even if that was inaccurate. They were not written with an expectation of publicity but did still subscribe to and conjure images of resolute manliness. In neither case, therefore, can the letters be simply read as sincere attempts to convey interior feeling. Rather, they are emotives designed to project a pre-defined narrative and to produce a particular emotional response from the reader. They were also perhaps, in Reddy's terms, 'self-altering': by expressing their happiness in the face of death or hardship, they worked to produce that stoicism in reality.<sup>83</sup> If they had written of and interrogated their fear or anguish, those concealed emotions may have been exacerbated.

The ulterior functions of the letters home are made especially clear by the fact that the impression they give tends to sit in marked contrast with the impression of the prison experience given in private diaries and retrospective memoirs. Of course, some men's experiences were better than others but the pervasive ideal of manly fortitude combined with the desire to reassure loved ones manifested in men misrepresenting their experience as more positive than the reality. He may have been too old to join the IRA,

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<sup>81</sup> NLI MS 49,933, Typescript 'Extracts from Prisoners' Letters (1922).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> W. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), p.128.

but the aforementioned diary of 60-year-old William Gogan reveals the potential for a significant distinction in a prisoner's emotional experience and the emotions they expressed in letters home. Gogan wrote in his diary that he was feeling 'very lonely and the grim surroundings of prison were well nigh crushing the spirit within' him.<sup>84</sup> Yet when his son Dick wrote to suggest that they propose to authorities that he take his father's place in prison, he told him there was no use and that he was 'all right and quite happy'.<sup>85</sup> Masculine pride is, of course, a feature here too. Even when writing to family members, a man who had been socialised in the wider societal ideals of stoic masculinity would feel compelled to maintain the façade of contentment despite his suffering. In private and retrospective accounts, however, the extent of emotional trauma during imprisonment is more likely to be revealed. Whilst Todd Andrews was imprisoned, his spirits 'reached a nadir which they have never touched before or since'.<sup>86</sup> Fintan Brennan, meanwhile, described the 'mental torture' of confinement, and how 'very depressed' he was when the number of letters that prisoners were permitted to receive from the outside was reduced and he was unable to hear from his wife: 'I could not rest or sleep, and was always in a sullen, gloomy mood'.<sup>87</sup> Some men faced solitary confinement, which was especially traumatic: Robert Holland for example wished he would 'go mad' to 'replace the hunger and loneliness and darkness' and was 'sorry [he] had not been killed in the fight'.<sup>88</sup> When sadness was revealed in letters, it was expressed in far more tentative terms. For example, whilst interned at Frongoch Michael Collins wrote of his melancholy to a friend on the outside: 'I can't tell you how small I feel sometimes...Well

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<sup>84</sup> NLI MS 41, 634/1, William Gogan's Mountjoy Diaries (January 1920).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.171.

<sup>87</sup> NLI MS 46,082, F. Brennan, 'Recollections of Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight (1921-22)' [undated].

<sup>88</sup> BMH WS 371, Robert Holland, pp.18-19.



I'm in that sort of mood again today – don't know why'.<sup>89</sup> Others who wrote of their depression in prison framed it in sacrificial terms, concluding that their sadness was worth it as they were suffering for the good of Mother Ireland. In a 1921 account of his internment experience, Louis J. Walsh wrote of the 'helpless loneliness that is wont to overcome a prisoner when the warder turns the key in his cell door', but added that he and his fellow internees were 'serving the "Dark Rosaleen" of their dreams' and that made everything feel easy.<sup>90</sup> Although Walsh admitted his loneliness his words still meet the ideals of republican rhetoric, just as the reassuring letters home did. Both evoke an image of contented suffering and sacrifice for a worthy cause but cannot be taken as accurate depictions of an individual's true mental state. Diaries and retrospective accounts may reveal emotional trauma, but it was difficult to express that trauma in the moment when one was expected to join in the collective performance of fortitude and good humour. Expressions of positive emotion could be deployed to mask experiences of negative emotion: the emotional regime did not require men to be emotionless but to express only prescribed emotions in prescribed circumstances. As the following section will illustrate, however, there remained a certain level of regulation and constraint even when it came to expressions of joy.

### The thrill of soldiering

Happiness in the face of hardship may have often been expressed as a means to a propagandistic end but being a Volunteer could also bring about genuinely joyful experiences. Revolutionary pursuits undoubtedly involved strife and suffering, but they could also involve glamour, adventure, camaraderie, esteem and power which

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<sup>89</sup> NLI MS 44,038/4, Photocopies of letters by Michael Collins whilst he was interned at Frongoch (1916).

<sup>90</sup> Walsh, *"On My Keeping"*, p.30.

unsurprisingly could generate a highly positive feeling. Seán MacEntee wrote in an undated account of the Easter Rising that being an Irish Volunteer made him feel ‘a free-man. A strange feeling of exhilaration and independence possessed one’.<sup>91</sup> Fighting for the nation was formulated in the republican discourse as the destiny of all Irishmen, and they were deemed to be in their natural and rightful position as nationalist soldiers. Enjoyment of soldiering was, therefore, very much compatible with notions of republican manliness. After the Easter Rising in particular, Volunteering could seem rather glamorous. It was a thrill and an honour to occupy the hallowed and noble freedom fighter role that had long been celebrated in the advanced nationalist culture most recruits had grown up around. *An tÓglách* continually reminded Volunteers of the highly important and heroic part they were playing; a 1921 issue, for instance, told readers that armed men taking a stand for ‘Ireland’s honour and Ireland’s right’ would forevermore be ‘ONE OF THE MEMORABLE THINGS IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD’.<sup>92</sup> To be counted among men deemed indelibly heroic was an attractive prospect and, once achieved, a source of great satisfaction. Charles Townshend has noted that the glamour in particular of the flying column meant it was never difficult to find new Volunteers ready to risk their lives in active service.<sup>93</sup>

When, in June 1922, the Free State forces bombarded the occupied Four Courts, the IRA’s Liam Mellows apparently stated, ‘God, it’s good to feel myself a soldier again after all those futile negotiations’.<sup>94</sup> Being a soldier was an identity to be enjoyed and to

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<sup>91</sup> UCDA P67/7, Seán MacEntee’s incomplete account of his activities during Easter Week 1916 [undated]; This of course has a broader resonance in the history of warfare, and Joanna Bourke, in her research on British and Irish soldiers in the First World War, noted that ‘time and time again servicemen can be heard admitting the joys associated with combat’ (J. Bourke, ‘Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of ‘Shell-shocked’ Men in Great Britain and Ireland 1914-1939’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.1 (2000), p.57.)

<sup>92</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no17 (16 July 1921), p.3.

<sup>93</sup> C. Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence* (London, 2013), p.186.

<sup>94</sup> O’Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.96.

feel proud of. It also provided opportunities for thrill and exhilaration unlike anything experienced in civilian or political life. Volunteering certainly had its lows and mundanities but those on active service could also have experiences that emulated those of the warriors and heroes of adventure stories, myth and Ireland's eulogised rebel history. During the Anglo-Irish Treaty debates, Mary MacSwiney proclaimed that women suffered the most from the hardships of war, because men could 'go out in the excitement of the fight and it brings its own honour and its own glory'.<sup>95</sup> She suggested that any hardship men faced in war was in part alleviated by the thrill and exultation of active engagement. This vision is indeed often borne out in memoirs which elaborate on the excitement and exhilaration involved in Volunteering. Charlie Dalton for example recalled 'nearly suffocating with excitement' during an operation to steal an armoured car in order to break his comrade out of prison.<sup>96</sup> At a later moment, his heart was 'thumping with excitement' after shooting at some soldiers.<sup>97</sup> Todd Andrews, meanwhile, was left in a 'state bordering on ecstasy' following an ambush during the War of Independence, for he had achieved his 'burning ambition to fire a shot for Ireland' and could now 'justifiably claim a place in the ranks of those who through successive generations had fought for Irish freedom'.<sup>98</sup> Not only active service, but training, drilling and parading could evoke such delight. Liam Deasy in his memoir wrote: 'Even now after a lapse of more than fifty years, I can recall the thrill of those early parades – the feeling of high adventure, the sense of dedicated service to the cause of Irish freedom, the secret rendezvous, and the gay comradeship'.<sup>99</sup> Across modern Western societies, this

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<sup>95</sup> M. Ward, 'Gender: Gendering the Irish Revolution' in J. Augusteijn (ed.), *The Irish Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.175.

<sup>96</sup> Dalton, *Dublin Brigade*, p.152.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, p.78.

<sup>98</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.164.

<sup>99</sup> Liam Deasy, *Towards Ireland Free* (Dublin, 1973), p.8.

masculine 'spirit' or 'allure' of adventure has been a factor both in drawing men into action and easing the tribulations of war and revolution.<sup>100</sup> There was, however, a darker element to the thrill some men derived from soldiering. Anne Dolan has suggested that while some suffered lasting trauma from the violent acts they were instructed to commit during the War of Independence, others appeared to actively enjoy the violence.<sup>101</sup> Dolan asserted that it is difficult to read the statements of some of the men of the Dublin IRA 'without concluding that these men took pleasure from the one thing that they had become very good at': killing.<sup>102</sup> Vinny Byrne had said, 'It was the joy of my life when I was handed a .45 revolver and six rounds'.<sup>103</sup> Ernie O'Malley, meanwhile, recalled how J.J. O'Connell 'savoured the detailed circumstances of the plugging of a detective or the bloody mess of a successful ambush'.<sup>104</sup> The fact that this apparent enjoyment of terror was not uncommon is indicative of a culture and discourse that glorified guns and propounded the sanctifying nature of bloodshed.<sup>105</sup> For Todd Andrews, that culture led him to wish violence upon himself, in order perhaps to get the 'full experience' of being a fighter. After being arrested, he found himself 'experiencing a perverse, rather masochistic, sense of disappointment at not having been beaten up or at least subjected to harsher methods of interrogation'.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps another factor influencing his desire was the story he could later tell, for men accrued a higher status if they had demonstrably

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<sup>100</sup> See J. Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21.2 (1998), pp.242-269; G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London, 1994); G. L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>101</sup> A. Dolan, 'Killing and Bloody Sunday, November 1920', *The Historical Journal* 49.3 (2006), p.807. Dolan notes that Liam Tobin in fact had a 'nervous breakdown' and according to a friend, 'looked like a man who had seen the inside of hell'.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> O'Malley, *Another Man's Wound*, p. 234-5.

<sup>105</sup> R. Mytton, 'Chapter Two: The Cult of Guns' *Nationalist Masculinities and the Irish Volunteers 1913-16* (MA dissertation, 2016) pp.24-37.

<sup>106</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.169.

suffered for the cause. Joy could be derived in every aspect of the Volunteer experience including, for some, committing and being subject to violence; those unpleasant moments were what made it 'authentic' and enabled young men to align themselves with their heroes who had also fought and suffered for the cause in the past.

Volunteers may have experienced feelings of gaiety and excitement during their service, but the way that they expressed and acted upon those feelings was of concern to IRA leaders. It was in their interest for their men to derive some gratification from soldiering and therefore to maintain their good spirits, but the expression of happiness was only permissible so long as it did not contravene the IRA's appearance of cool-headedness and respectability. When the truce was called in the summer of 1921 and brought the War of Independence to a close, many Volunteers engaged in celebrations. Frank O'Connor described the 'perfect summer' when 'young men who had been for years in hiding drove about the country in commandeered cars, drinking, dancing, brandishing their guns'.<sup>107</sup> These were transgressive behaviours stemming from young men's rapture. In the liminal truce period where Volunteers experienced a greater degree of autonomy, the rules governing their comportment and actions became somewhat nebulous. IRA GHQ and the writers of *An tÓglách* nonetheless continued their attempts to regulate Volunteer conduct even off-duty, and sought to maintain the respectable image the organisation had produced for itself. The publication maintained that, despite the cessation in fighting, Volunteers had no less 'discipline, zeal, energy, morale and effectiveness' than before.<sup>108</sup> It simultaneously, however, warned against 'a spirit of happy-go-lucky optimism and a craving of dissipation', firmly discouraged consumption of alcohol, reminded readers to keep up their appearances through, for example,

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<sup>107</sup> O'Connor, *An Only Child*, p.208.

<sup>108</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III. no.21 (12 August 1921), p.1.

‘attention to dress’ and ‘restraint from bad language,’ and implored them to generally maintain the honour of the army by doing nothing to discredit it.<sup>109</sup> Any expression of elation at the ceasefire was, therefore, expected to stay confined within the parameters of respectable, composed and moral manliness. O’Connor’s account of course indicates the limited impact that such stipulations had but still, the instructions found in *An tÓglách* indicate that positive emotions and their manifestation could be policed just as negative ones were.

Outside of the specifics of the truce period, Volunteers’ expressions of happiness were still constrained by the notion that republican fighters ought to take their task very seriously and be entirely earnest in carrying it out. Whilst a Volunteer’s happiness in the face of death and hardship was celebrated, his expressions of happiness at other moments were more ambiguous and could potentially detract from the composed, respectable manly performance. There was a balance to be struck between measured positivity and chipper frivolity or insouciance: to be too jolly, relaxed and exuberant could look like a lack of dedication, vigilance or zeal. During the bombardment of the Four Courts in 1922, one of Ernie O’Malley’s comrades, Chummy Hogan, remarked ‘This is great gas’. O’Malley wrote in his memoir in response, ‘I did not feel too cheerful. Where did these men inherit their gay insouciance, as if war was an everyday trivial matter?’.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Thomas Ryan derided those who, unlike ‘serious-minded men’ like himself, were ‘inclined to treat matters lightly and casually, not giving serious thought to the possible developments of the future’.<sup>111</sup> This was in keeping with the exhortations of duty and seriousness found frequently in the pages of *An tÓglách*; an August 1920 issue

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<sup>109</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III no.27 (23 September 1921), p.2; *An tÓglách* vol.III no.29 (7 October 1921), p.1.

<sup>110</sup> O’Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.110.

<sup>111</sup> NLI MS 44,047/5, ‘One man’s flying column’ by Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Ryan, *Tipperary Historical Journal* [undated].

warned against 'happy-go-lucky men and happy-go-lucky tactics' impeding IRA efficacy, and a July 1921 issue celebrated the fact that 'easy-going methods of work' had become a thing of the past.<sup>112</sup> Volunteers were not, therefore, to enjoy themselves too much – joviality could lead to frivolity which was considered dangerous and also departed from the IRA's desired decorous appearance of credibility. Joviality may have been more acceptable in the earlier years of optimism and adventure but as the conflict dragged and developed into civil war, merriment could look like apathy. Nonetheless, there were certainly those who, in the words of Tom Garvin, 'took themselves very seriously indeed' throughout the period, and perhaps throughout their lives as devout republicans.<sup>113</sup> Their personalities were, he argues, sometimes reminiscent of Catholic seminarians: 'capable of great self-sacrifice, obsessed with moral principle, often humourless and lacking in emotional outlets'.<sup>114</sup> Expressions of happiness may have denoted stoic manliness when professed in times of suffering, but they still had to be contained in order to fit with the adjacent republican manly ideal of sobriety and seriousness. The permissibility of any emotion that a Volunteer expressed was contingent on extent and context. Despite the prominent discourse of emotional restraint, in reality emotional expressions rested on discretion. There was no absolute vilification nor absolute acceptance of one emotional response but rather, the emotional regime was sufficiently malleable to meet the complicated realities, the traumatic lows and the euphoric highs, of revolutionary warfare.

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<sup>112</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.17 (15 August 1920), p.2; *An tÓglách* vol.III, no.16 (8 July 1921), p.1.

<sup>113</sup> T. Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland 1858-1928* (Dublin, 1987), p.162.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

Being an actively engaged Irish Volunteer during the revolutionary years was an intense experience that could generate more emotionally taxing moments, as well as more emotionally fulfilling moments, than an individual was ever likely to encounter in everyday life. The culture of militant republicanism was, however, marked by an unattainable ideal that saw Volunteers as stoic, unwavering warrior-heroes with complete control over their emotions. The organisation's emotional regime may have been strict but it did have a degree of malleability and could be adapted to the turmoil of revolutionary life: it did not simply vilify all emotional expressions and nor was any particular emotion prohibited in all guises and circumstances. The regime, and the manly ideal that it was based on, shaped, but could not entirely dictate, the way that individuals considered, expressed, talked and wrote about their feelings. Even within the confines of military regulation, there was a significant discrepancy between the lauded martial manly ideal found across republican rhetoric and the messy realities of a soldier's experiences. That discrepancy, and more broadly the complexity of how emotions were presented and expressed, is revealed through a careful consideration of primarily retrospective but also contemporaneous Volunteer accounts. The idealisation of emotional control and restraint did not simply lead Volunteers to omit emotion from their diaries, letters and memoirs. Carefully curated emotional expressions could be deployed in service of a manly performance or elided in the maintenance of a manly performance; a man's feelings could be expressed unreservedly at the time or discussed frankly in retrospect; denigrated emotions could be channelled into a permissible emotional expression, or semantically framed to maintain the appearance of manliness.

In many cases, the fundamentally emotional nature of this period only becomes clear in reflective retrospective accounts. This is partly due to the nature of these sources:



they are longer, are generally intended to entertain a wider audience and are shaped by the circumstances in which they were written. But it also points to a contemporaneous culture of emotional restraint and concealment. Whilst there are certainly moments of emotional engagement in the accounts written during or soon after the events of the revolutionary period, it is those memoirs written decades later by men who were then in their middle or old age that are often the most earnest in their references to emotion. In general, IRA men appeared more comfortable with their emotions and more conscious of the pressures they faced to conceal them when writing with some retrospect. Moreover, memoirs simply allow a kind of self-reflection and indulgence that men's day-to-day interactions are unlikely to. They may have been thoroughly constructed, and descriptions of an emotional moment could also play into the typical heroic narrative, but such ego documents can still provide an insight into mentalities and the meaning that individuals ascribed to their experiences. According to Richard English, Ernie O'Malley was 'guarded about emotions and preferred not to be questioned about the personal', yet his two memoirs recounting his experiences with the IRA provide rich grounds for the study of emotions.<sup>115</sup> This points to the fact that for these military men, lack of contemporary emotional expression should not be taken as an indication of a lack of emotional experience. Writing in retrospect, O'Malley was able to discuss his emotions and interiority in a way that he could or would not have with his comrades in arms.

The study of emotions is so complex because emotions are always there, constructing the meaning that individuals give to situations and shaping their mental, verbal and behavioural responses to those situations. In the words of Rob Boddice, 'affective life is inextricably bundled with human activities of all kinds, such that no

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<sup>115</sup> R. English, *Ernie O'Malley: IRA Intellectual* (Oxford, 1998), p.176.

practice, no experience, no decision is ever without its attendant feelings, even when the feelings in question are framed as the denial of emotion'.<sup>116</sup> There is indeed no getting away from emotion, and without addressing the emotional component of experience and action, the history of the IRA and its revolutionary endeavours is incomplete. The history of emotions and its attendant concepts can add to and alter the existing historiography of the years 1916 to 1923 by revealing another component to the revolutionary experience and to the factors that guided revolutionary acts, but as yet they have been insufficiently applied.<sup>117</sup> As these two chapters have illustrated, masculinity provides one valuable lens through which to explore the role of emotion in the republican struggle. Reading men's writing about emotions alongside the discourses of manliness that permeated the period reveals that they were thoroughly intertwined. Ideals of manliness shaped the emotional regime, which in turn shaped men's conceptions, experiences, expressions and portrayals of emotion. It may be overlooked in traditional political and military histories but exploring the emotional dimension of war and revolution is essential if we are to truly comprehend how such turbulent events unfolded. Tom Garvin has argued that 'passion influences political behaviour as least as much as does rational calculation of one's interests', and 'certainly, emotion rather than rationality appears to have dominated the behaviour of many political actors' in revolutionary Ireland.<sup>118</sup> Emotion undoubtedly dominated the behaviours of military actors too. Despite the almost incessant output of *An tÓglách* stating that IRA soldiers ought to be, 'cool', 'determined', 'courageous', 'gallant' and so on, they could not erase the thrill, the sadness

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<sup>116</sup> R. Boddice, *A History of Feelings* (Manchester, 2019), p.15.

<sup>117</sup> There have, however, been promising developments with regard to the history of emotions in Irish historiography in recent years. For example in May 2018, Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid organised the 'Emotions in Irish History' conference, whilst 2019 saw the publication of Katie Barclay's pioneering monograph, *Men on Trial: Performing Embodiment, Emotion and Identity in Ireland 1800-45* (Manchester, 2019).

<sup>118</sup> Garvin, *Nationalist Revolutionaries*, p.67; Plamper, *History of Emotions*, p.281.

and the fear that pervaded these years. They may have been mediated, channelled, concealed, reconstructed or presented carefully so as not to undermine masculine identities, but they were there, and they were integral to men's actions, experiences and memories of the revolution.

## Chapter Five: Brotherhood and the Making and Breaking of Volunteer Relationships

In the period from the Easter Rising of 1916 to the end of the Civil War in 1923, the relationships between Irish Volunteers were both intensified and destabilised. The turbulence and extremity of the revolution saw notions of brotherhood and bonds between comrades sharpened at times and tested or sundered at others. Throughout, there remained a pressure upon soldiers to engage with and display camaraderie, altruism and a united manly fortitude. This chapter will firstly explore notions of republican brotherhood and its related culture of collectivity, the gratifying and heartening effects of bonds between comrades, and the pressures to conform to the brotherly ideal. It will then go on to consider the breakdown of that ideal which occurred with the Anglo-Irish Treaty and ensuing Civil War.

Modern European nationalisms have long been imbued with the language of brotherhood, and modern European armies with the language of brothers in arms. The volunteer army of the French Revolution was the first of its kind and was conceived as a 'community of brotherhood', 'held together by a common danger and a common goal'.<sup>1</sup> The veneration of fraternity amongst the nation's men, and particularly the expression of that fraternity in armed struggle for a nationalist cause, proliferated across Europe through the long nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The Irish Volunteers followed in that lineage, and

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<sup>1</sup> D. Kaplan, 'What can the concept of friendship contribute to the study of national identity?', *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (2007), p.235; For more examples of the entwining of brotherhood and nationalism, see S. Dudink, K. Hagemann & J. Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester, 2004); I. Blom, K. Hagemann & C. Hall (eds.), *Gendered Nations: Nationalism and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000); T. Mayer (ed.) *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (London, 2000); L. Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York, 2003); G. L. Mosse, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism* (Hanover, 1993); D. Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> In his influential *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991), Benedict Anderson argued that more broadly, 'the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship' (B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), p.7).

their actions were conceived as fraternal nationalism in action. This was compounded by the anti-colonial nature of their struggle, as the reclamation of masculine power was aligned with the reclamation of national autonomy. In the Irish Volunteers, brotherhood meant devotion to the wider community of republican Irishmen, devotion to one's local IRA networks, and devotion to the comrades that one fought and suffered alongside.

Sarah Cole has made the distinction between 'friendship' and 'comradeship', using the former to refer to meaningful relationships between individual men, and the latter to refer to commitment to an affiliated group of men'.<sup>3</sup> For Irish Volunteers, that distinction was regularly blurred as recruits often fought alongside friends and family members with whom they had meaningful relationships that long predated the revolutionary period.<sup>4</sup> Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth century had, moreover, been marked by an 'associational culture' whereby men and women with a broadly nationalist outlook engaged with a variety of formal and informal political, social and cultural networks.<sup>5</sup> Many of those most engaged in associational culture were young people and Roy Foster has identified the 'strong if unspoken charge of homosocial bonding' in their networks.<sup>6</sup> Organisations like the Gaelic League founded in 1893 and the GAA founded in 1884 had helped to facilitate the creation and reinforcement of close relationships between young people from nationalist families whilst encouraging engagement with Gaelic language, culture, sport and history. Such networks laid the groundwork upon which it was a natural next step for these young nationalist Irishmen to join the Irish Volunteers when they formed in 1913.

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<sup>3</sup> S. Cole, 'Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War', *ELH* 68.2 (2001), p.474.

<sup>4</sup> See p.39.

<sup>5</sup> R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848-82* (Dublin, 1998); R.V. Comerford and J. Kelly (eds.), *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad* (Dublin, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London, 2015), p.140.

The exceptional and intensified nature of the revolutionary experience strengthened these existing networks and friendships, and also facilitated the rapid creation of new ones. As one former Volunteer put it, 'the comradeship of people who never knew each other before couldn't be understood now'.<sup>7</sup> The revolutionary experience was indeed often depicted as unique and therefore unintelligible to outsiders.<sup>8</sup> Whether they had known each other before their recruitment to the Volunteers or not, the mutual dependence and shared risk of the paramilitary struggle sat in marked contrast to the 'humdrum' of everyday civilian life.<sup>9</sup> Even before they had armed and there was any prospect of military engagement, the creation of the Volunteers had brought something new, enjoyable and exciting to the lives of its recruits. Volunteer Laurence Nugent for instance recalled the 'indescribable' impact of their formation in 1913 as 'a feeling of comradeship which never previously existed sprung up'.<sup>10</sup> He presents an image of joyous togetherness, where 'men who had only a nodding acquaintance shook hands when they met in the street' and 'young men clicked their heels when they met their pals and actually hugged and pulled each other around: all were joining up'.<sup>11</sup> In the following years as the Irish Volunteers took part in the Easter Rising and later developed into the IRA, that sense of brotherhood was heightened. For the guerrilla fighters, the wider feeling of camaraderie was accompanied by the dangers of combat, the risk of arrest, injury or death, the hardship of imprisonment and internment, and the exhaustion of being on the run. In these trying circumstances, Volunteers became increasingly close and reliant on one another. The signing of the

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<sup>7</sup> J. L. Sullivan quoted in P. Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1998), p.270.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> D. Kaplan, *The Men We Loved: Male Friendship and Nationalism in Israeli Culture* (New York, 2006), p.51.

<sup>10</sup> BMH WS 907, Laurence Nugent, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, however, saw the beginning of a breakdown in brotherhood. The ensuing Civil War had a catastrophic impact on the personal relationships and wider community of men who had fought together in the Easter Rising and War of Independence.

This chapter will explore the notions, experiences and pressures of brotherhood that existed across the revolutionary period. It will employ a range of both retrospective and contemporary sources but accounts of prison and internment experiences will feature especially prominently, in part because of their abundance but also because notions of comradeship and brotherhood were magnified in these confined all-male environments where men relied on each other for support in the face of hardship. The sections that follow will consider brotherhood as a venerated concept, as a guiding principle, as military beneficial, as a gratifying experience and as a norm that Volunteers were pressured to conform to, before going onto consider how men on each side of the Treaty divide experienced and navigated the breakdown of unity and comradeship.

### The role of brotherhood in the republican imagination

The Irish Volunteers were conceived as a noble Irish brotherhood, bound together by their love of the nation and working in unison to achieve its independence. On their foundation in late 1913, recruits were encouraged to fully participate in their new fraternity. An issue of *The Irish Volunteer* journal published in February 1914 stated that ‘a spirit of true brotherhood should exist between all Volunteers’ and encouraged new recruits to engage in ‘a bond of friendship, of affection even and a manly comradeship’.<sup>12</sup> The rhetoric of collectivity and brotherly devotion continued through the War of

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<sup>12</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol. I no.3 (21 February 1914), p.10.

Independence and Truce period; a 1921 issue of *An tÓglách* stated that a good Volunteer would 'order his general bearing and demeanour as to live on good terms and fellowship with all his comrades, and...always be animated with a love and zeal for his unit, and strive earnestly to maintain the esprit de corps'.<sup>13</sup> Such directives formulated comradeship as a duty and put pressure on men to maintain appearances of unity and affection. Volunteer Seán Prendergast indeed recalled in his witness statement that it was the 'duty' of Volunteers to 'preserve the ties of camaraderie and to maintain the Volunteer spirit on any and every occasion'.<sup>14</sup>

The development of a close-knit brotherhood was presented as not only a useful foundation for, or beneficial product of, militant republicanism but also a valuable objective in and of itself. The very first edition of *The Irish Volunteer* proclaimed that the formation of the Volunteers had provided 'the most opportune means of bringing the manhood of Ireland together to teach them brotherly love' and was working 'towards uniting Irishmen of all sections in brotherly co-operation in the cause of Irish Nationality'.<sup>15</sup> Notions of brotherhood, and specifically a vision of manly brothers in arms achieving Irish independence, had long been integral to the republican ideal.<sup>16</sup> The first line in the 1791 constitution of the Society of United Irishmen stated the organisation had been 'constituted for the purpose of forwarding a Brotherhood of Affection'.<sup>17</sup> Just as the United Irishman rebellion seven years later put that brotherhood into action, the Easter Rising and War of Independence saw the realisation of the brotherly ideal in the

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<sup>13</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III no.27 (23 September 1921), p.2.

<sup>14</sup> BMH WS 755, Seán Prendergast, p.427.

<sup>15</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.I no.1 (7 February 1914), p.4; The republican writer James Stephens went so far as to assert in 1917 that 'more urgent than any political emancipation is the drawing together of men of good will in endeavour to assist their necessitous land' (J. Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1917), p.147).

<sup>16</sup> C. Kennedy, *'What Can Women Give But Tears': Gender, Politics and Irish National Identity in the 1790s* (PhD thesis) (University of York, 2004), p.57.

<sup>17</sup> 'The Constitution of the United Irishmen in 1791' in W.H. Maxwell, *History of the Irish Rebellion in 1798* (London, 1854), p.437.



twentieth century. The close-knit brotherhood and associated manly values that had been discussed and fantasised in earlier years became a lived reality for Volunteers.

As well as constituting a romantic vision of nationalist fervour, the development of brotherhood amongst Volunteers was recognised as having material benefits. By the turn of the twentieth century it was already widely acknowledged in European military theory that close comradeship amongst soldiers was militarily beneficial and should be actively fostered because men 'are less likely to fight for abstractions – like honour of the nation – than for the friend standing beside them'.<sup>18</sup> This notion was echoed amongst the leadership of the Irish Volunteers, and in 1922 the organisation's former Inspector General Colonel Maurice Moore looked back upon the years since their foundation and concluded that the 'ideal of companionship, kept in mind by our soldiers during the eight years of struggle and suffering, brought success to our arms'.<sup>19</sup> Comradeship and friendship were also presented as motivating forces in retrospective accounts of the revolution. Dan Breen's 1924 memoir includes an account of the capture of his close comrade Seán Hogan by British forces in 1919 which clearly depicts comradeship as a driving force for military enterprise.<sup>20</sup> On hearing of the capture, Breen's Tipperary battalion resolved to 'rescue Hogan or die in the attempt'.<sup>21</sup> When cycling to the railway station where they hoped to rescue him, the men were plagued by fatigue, to the extent that they 'could have slept on the roadside', yet their 'sense of loyalty kept up [their] strength' and enabled them to carry on.<sup>22</sup> Breen gives the rather romantic impression

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<sup>18</sup> B.J. Martin, *Napoleonic Friendships: Military Fraternity, Intimacy and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century France* (London, 2011), p.10; J. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1999), p.128; S. Cole, *Modernism, Male Friendship and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2003), p.141.

<sup>19</sup> NLI MS 10,571/6/8, Col. M. Moore, 'Irish Volunteer Ideals' (1922).

<sup>20</sup> D. Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Dublin, 1924), p.62.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

that the men's loyalty and love for Hogan, as well as for each other, physically spurred them on despite their plight. His account also plays into the ideals of masculine bodily endurance that were discussed in Chapter Two; motivated by their love for the cause and their brotherly union, these Volunteers were happy to endure physical strain. Peadar O'Donnell similarly presented comradeship as a resource that could be drawn upon for motivation and physical endurance. When recounting the building of an escape tunnel at Curragh military prison in 1923, he wrote that he and the men involved 'had been great comrades, and it was that comradeship that saw the tunnel through'.<sup>23</sup> Aside from these physical feats, friendship was more broadly depicted as helping men to sustain their enthusiasm for the fight. Liam Deasy, for example, explained that the 'spirit of friendship and comradeship' extended to him by Richard Mulcahy and Cathal Brugha in 1919 was a source of 'great encouragement'.<sup>24</sup> Whilst bonds of friendship certainly did help Volunteers to maintain their spirits and commitment to keep up the struggle, these examples are also clear literary choices that play into the narrative of brotherhood and adventure that is common across republican memoirs and which former Volunteers may have felt duty bound to reproduce. This duality is indicative of the wider nature of brotherhood in the revolutionary period and beyond: it developed organically and was genuinely gratifying and heartening, but it was also actively encouraged and Volunteers were pressured to conform to the ideal of a united, loving fraternity through their actions and words.

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<sup>23</sup> P. O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open: An Irish Civil War Prison Diary* (London, 1932), p.121.

<sup>24</sup> L. Deasy, *Brother Against Brother* (Dublin, 1982), p.17.

### The culture of collectivity

The idealisation of brotherhood in Irish republicanism was combined with an expectation that Volunteers would be selfless and consistently prioritise the collective good over their individual concerns. *The Irish Volunteer* had stated that ‘an army is not an aggregation of individuals but a co-ordinated and centralised instrument of policy’ and ‘Volunteers everywhere must stand together as one man’.<sup>25</sup> *An tÓglách*, meanwhile, reminded its readers that they were ‘all links in a big chain’ or ‘all portions of the national machinery’ and should act in harmony with their comrades and in the best interests of the organisation and the nation.<sup>26</sup> To successfully perform the idealised Volunteer role was, therefore, to shun self-regard in favour of practising and preaching collectivity, companionability and brotherly devotion. To do so signified an individual’s courage and commitment to the cause.

A sense of collectivity may have been actively encouraged by the Volunteer leadership, but it was also simply a product of the revolutionary environment where men often shared unavoidably close quarters and became mutually dependent on one another. Prisons and internment camps may have been the most common place where men became physically and emotionally close, but it was not the only one. From their occupation of Dublin buildings in the Easter Rising, through the sharing of beds whilst on the run in flying columns during the War of Independence, to the time 200 anti-Treaty republicans spent occupying the Four Courts together at the outset of the Civil War, the revolutionary period was a time when active Volunteers had little option but to share space, warmth and comfort. The Four Courts occupation was the most protracted of these

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<sup>25</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.I no.1 (7 February 1914), p.4; *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II no.37 (21 August 1915), p.4.

<sup>26</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II no.11 (15 May 1920), p.1; *An tÓglách* vol.II. no.7 (15 March 1920), p.2.

examples, beginning on 14 April 1922 and ending in surrender after a siege by Free State forces two and a half months later. Ernie O'Malley was one of the occupation's leaders, and gave the following description of the close-knit homosocial environment:

We were drawn together in the Four Courts. There was an air of gaiety, a greater sense of comradeship. We learned to know each other better...We discovered little personal things; we talked of home and of our friends. We discussed books and sang old ballads. Late in the night we could be found talking in each other's rooms. The feeling of comradeship in common danger bound us closer together, it helped us to comprehend our deeper feelings and ideals, gave us more understanding; we became less impersonal.<sup>27</sup>

O'Malley paints a picture of candid intimacy and suggests that he felt supported by the connections forged and nourished during the occupation. Contemporaneous documents attest to these close relations. In May 1922 Liam Lynch wrote a letter to his brother telling him that whilst he would try to get home for Easter, 'really speaking' he was 'at home in the Four Courts'.<sup>28</sup> The men who occupied the building were amongst comrades they had fought with for a number of years previously and in many cases had been friends prior to the revolution. Their personal relationships and sense of togetherness was heightened by their physical proximity and emotional dependence on one another. Unsurprisingly then, the Four Courts mimicked a domestic setting. For Lynch, the feeling of togetherness with like-minded men in fact surpassed the comfort of traditional home and family life and he was happy to express that to his brother. The public and private were blurred as a man's comrades became a substitute for his family.

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<sup>27</sup> O'Malley, *Singing Flame*, p.88.

<sup>28</sup> NLI MS 36,251/27, Liam Lynch to Tom Lynch (1 May 1922).

It was in prisons and internment camps, however, where the domestic sphere was most clearly imitated. As well as providing emotional reassurance and sharing living space, prisoners would, for example, cut each other's hair, wash each other's clothes and share their food and possessions.<sup>29</sup> In these homosocial spaces, men were required to perform the tasks and provide the support that would typically come from wives, mothers and sisters. The parameters of the masculine role shifted to meet the exceptional circumstances of prison life. One republican prisoner at Maryborough Jail in 1922 noted how domesticated the men there had become: 'We've taken our diplomas in being homely and domestic at housework...To see us on the job you'd swear t'was our vocation'.<sup>30</sup> He seems to acknowledge the novelty of men taking on domestic duties and indeed it was only out of necessity that they carried out such tasks, but men supporting other men was also congruent with notions of manly community. Imprisonment provided an opportunity to enact and display harmony, altruism and codependence amongst the male republican community. Some were more reliant on their fellow inmates than others, and it was often the teenage Volunteers who most acutely felt the absence of family. Older men could therefore take on a somewhat paternal role in guiding, advising and comforting their younger or more inexperienced compatriots. In Knutsford jail, Robert Holland, who remarked that he was at that time not yet old enough to grow facial hair, was grateful for those men who 'acted both as father and mother' to him by giving him bread from their own limited rations, caring for and advising him, and keeping him out

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<sup>29</sup> In institutions where inmates were permitted to receive parcels, those fortunate and wealthy enough to have regular deliveries of food, clothes and books would share them amongst their less fortunate companions. For example, Pierce McCan had more food delivered to him in Kilmainham Jail in 1916 than he required so would share the excess amongst those who 'looked palest' in the exercise yard. McCan also recalled that Eoin MacNeill distributed some of the socks and shirts sent to him among the poorer prisoners. (NLI MS 45,924, Pierce McCan, 'Three months in England's prisons' (1916)).

<sup>30</sup> NLI MS 46,623, Two prison autograph books in the possession of Éamon Reid (1922-23).

of trouble.<sup>31</sup> Whilst visits, letters and parcels could provide limited emotional relief for inmates, it was the companions they were alongside 24 hours a day who made up their primary support system.

That support system was particularly important when prisoners faced harsh conditions with few provisions. In the prisons and internment camps that were especially cold and cramped, men were not only emotionally but physically close. For example, in their respective accounts of their time as prisoners in Richmond Barracks after the Easter Rising, both Darrell Figgis and Pierce McCan note that each individual was given two thin blankets, one intended to be put on the floor and one to cover themselves. However, as this did not prove sufficient, many men chose to double up and share their blankets for warmth.<sup>32</sup> Figgis also recalled that all the inmates in his large cell at the Barracks were given the option to move into smaller and more comfortable rooms of two beds each, but he and his comrades immediately refused, preferring to stay in a large group so as not to 'injure or forego their brotherhood'.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, although Peadar O'Donnell was allowed his own cell in Kilmainham Jail, he often chose to drag his mattress into the cells of other inmates.<sup>34</sup> It is telling that each of these two men chose to record the fact that they wished to always remain close to their fellow detainees: their bodily proximity works as a symbol of the friendly unanimity they proclaimed to share, and of how individualism was renounced in favour of collectivism. They present a narrative in which the desire for privacy was relinquished in favour of the gratifying support of one's comrades and the desire to maintain the republican brotherhood.

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<sup>31</sup> BMH WS 371, Robert Holland, p.13.

<sup>32</sup> Figgis, *Chronicle of Jails* p.50; NLI MS 45,924, Pierce McCan 'Three months in England's prisons' (1916).

<sup>33</sup> Figgis, *Chronicle of Jails*, p. 56.

<sup>34</sup> O'Donnell, *Gates Flew Open*, p.23.

To engage whole-heartedly with that republican brotherhood, and to place it ahead of one's personal interests, was part of the performance of Volunteer manliness: to have been selfish or self-centred would have contravened the IRA ideals of morality, sacrifice and unity. Stories of men who were deemed to have put their comrades' interests above their own were therefore celebrated for their heroism. A particularly clear example of this comes in the case of Paddy Moran, who, in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday in November 1920, was arrested and sentenced to execution. In 1921, a plan was hatched to rescue him and his comrades from Kilmainham Jail. Apparently to ensure the success of the escape plan, Moran insisted that only two prisoners ought to go – Ernie O'Malley and Frank Teeling.<sup>35</sup> According to a celebratory commemorative document, despite their attempts to persuade him and the fact that he knew he would otherwise be executed, Moran refused to go in case of jeopardising the chances of the others.<sup>36</sup> In death then, Moran was praised for his sacrifice for the Republic, and for the lives of his comrades. This version of events is, at least, the popular narrative – there is in fact evidence to suggest that Moran firmly believed he would not be executed as witnesses could place him elsewhere from the scene of the crime.<sup>37</sup> The presentation of circumstances to emphasise the heroism and selflessness of individuals, at a time when these traits were highly valued, is unsurprising. Whether or not it was accurate, the story was a convenient one: it provided propaganda that emphasised the altruistic virtue of Volunteers to outsiders, and simultaneously reminded recruits of the kind of unselfish self-sacrificing behaviour that was expected of them. In retrospective accounts too, the selfless character of individual Volunteers was emphasised. Tom Barry for example

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<sup>35</sup> NLI MS 44,048/2, Commemorative booklet entitled 'Paddy Moran gave his life for Ireland' [undated].

<sup>36</sup> Ibid; The booklet included the line, 'In the prime of manhood, the laughing, friendly, gentle Paddy Moran had given his for the country he loved'.

<sup>37</sup> C. Nic Dháibhéid, *Seán MacBride: A Republican Life, 1904-1946* (Liverpool, 2011), p.41.

wrote of Seán Buckley, his brigade's Intelligence Officer, that he 'worried continually about all our lives, but never about his own' despite the fact he would certainly have been killed if captured by the British.<sup>38</sup> Barry himself expressed similar sentiments, writing the following reflection on the flying column that he commanded: 'One knew that they could be relied on to the last, but on the other hand, I grew to have such an affectionate regard for them that I worried continually in case I failed them through negligence or inefficiency'.<sup>39</sup> Charlie Dalton, meanwhile, felt such affection for Dick McKee that he couldn't bear to see him in danger and wished to 'surround him with an invisible wall of steel so that nothing could hurt him'.<sup>40</sup> Active guerrillas like Dalton and Barry spent large amounts of time with their brigades, often in situations where they relied on each other for their safety and their lives. It is therefore understandable that they would feel and express great care and fidelity for their comrades, but these statements were also shaped by a culture in which altruism and close comradeship were encouraged and celebrated. They also played into ideals of manly sacrifice. Indeed, Sinn Féin's 1917 definition of self-sacrifice had, alongside love of God and country, included 'love of...one's friends, more than oneself'.<sup>41</sup>

Notions of personal sacrifice for the collective good reached their peak in the hunger strikes that took place in various prisons during the revolutionary period. The act of going on strike could indicate a Volunteer's selfless manly credentials, but they were also expected to perform that selflessness through their words and actions during the ordeal. Accounts of men's comportment whilst striking were essential in relaying the narrative of altruistic heroism to outsiders. During his hunger strike in 1920, Terence

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<sup>38</sup> T. Barry, *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* (Cork, 1949), p.42.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.221.

<sup>40</sup> C. Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade (1917-1921)* (London, 1929), p.96.

<sup>41</sup> *The Ethics of Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1917, p.6) [available at: <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland//images/uploads/further-reading/Ed120-EthicsOfSinnFein-NLI.pdf>].



MacSwiney successfully played the role of heroic virtuosity. He was joined in his protest by eleven striking comrades in Cork Jail, and his chaplain, Father Dominic O'Connor, claimed that,

In spite of his own sufferings his mind and heart were full of his comrades in Cork Jail. He daily asked for them and daily prayed for him. Their heroic fortitude was he continually praising. They were 'his boys'.<sup>42</sup>

In the case of MacSwiney's hunger strike in particular, there was a significant level of stage management at play as leading republicans sought to use both his treatment and his courage as propaganda tools. Statements like Father Dominic's contributed to a carefully constructed image which emphasised the righteousness of MacSwiney as well as the unshakeable intensity of republican men's commitment to each other. The diaries of ordinary men, who would have been far less conscious of potential audience interpretation, provide a more convincing account of the compassion that existed between striking prisoners. Whilst William Gogan was in Mountjoy Jail in 1920, a mass hunger strike involving over 100 prisoners took place until they achieved political prisoner status. Gogan did not take part himself, but wrote in his diary that he went around to see how the men were bearing up after six days of no food. He apparently found that 'they were all splendid' and 'their faces lit up with a heavenly smile when they heard how well the other comrades were keeping...they all seem to be more anxious about each other than they are about themselves'.<sup>43</sup> It was imagined that men were hunger striking not only for their release and the advancement of the independence struggle, but also for one another and for the wider brotherhood of republican men. In an autograph book from 'Tintown' internment camp, one man wrote on the first day of his hunger strike that he

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<sup>42</sup> O'Hegarty, *A Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney*, p.94.

<sup>43</sup> NLI MS 41,634/5, William Gogan's Mountjoy Diaries 1920.

pledged himself 'by the living Republic to the lives of [his] comrades'.<sup>44</sup> Frank Gallagher, meanwhile, wrote in his diary of the tactic used by prison staff at Mountjoy in 1920 of inviting family members to visit prisoners whilst they were striking in an attempt to induce them to eat. His response was that these 'tricks' would come to little avail, for 'the men are pledged to the lives of one another and the honour of Ireland...And these things are greater than father and mother, than wife and sister.'<sup>45</sup> Gallagher was writing on the day that the 'trick' had been attempted in what was at the time a private diary, and therefore provides a rare insight into the mentality of united brotherhood as it existed during the War of Independence. He gives the impression that the masculine republican collective had become more important than familial relations, and to stick with his comrades in the fight mattered above all else.

Many hunger strikes ended quickly as demands were met and men were released, but in the protracted strikes that either did, or came close to, ending in death, discourses of brotherhood and sacrifice became particularly closely intertwined. To die for the cause and country was synonymous with dying for one's comrades in arms, and upheld as the noblest way to die. Multiple autograph books from the period quote these lines from the nineteenth century Irish poet Michael Joseph Barry:

Whether on the scaffold high,  
Or in the battle van,  
The fittest place for man to die,  
Is where man dies for man.<sup>46</sup>

It was imagined that the depth and profundity of men's friendships could be expressed in terms of their willingness to die for one another, whether through military action or

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<sup>44</sup> NLI MS 24,933, Tintown and Mountjoy autograph book (1923).

<sup>45</sup> F. Gallagher, *Days of Fear: Diary of a 1920s Hunger Striker* (London, 1928), p.62.

<sup>46</sup> NLI MS 24,933, Tintown and Mountjoy autograph book (1923); Frongoch 1916 Autograph Book [available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/book-pages/frongoch-internment-camp-1916-page-28/>].

sacrificial endurance. Peadar O'Donnell recalled being in his cell in Kilmainham Jail with the door open when Liam Mellows, a greatly admired figure in the anti-Treaty IRA, walked past in the corridor. An unnamed fellow prisoner who was leaning against the door then said, 'I would ask no better fate than to die for that man.'<sup>47</sup> Just as it was deemed a privilege to die in service of Irish independence, it was a privilege to die for an admired comrade or leader. O'Donnell mused that perhaps a common means by which men tested their appreciation for other men was to ask themselves 'would I die to save him in a pinch?', writing that 'it is an emotional test just as a woman tests her liking for a man by her instinctive reaction to the thought of kissing him'.<sup>48</sup> This is an interesting parallel to have drawn and suggests that, to O'Donnell's mind, an equally profound attachment could exist between comrades as existed between lovers. In a culture that valued sacrifice so highly, professing a willingness to die for one's comrades was the most meaningful way that a man could express the extent of his affection and devotion to his fellow republicans and therefore to Ireland. It was an expression of personal friendship and admiration as well as an expression of sacrificial commitment to the cause.

### 'Our comradeship softened our hardship'

Volunteers may have been encouraged to engage in close comradeship with their peers and exposed to discourses encouraging and celebrating brotherhood, but this does not detract from the genuine fondness and attachments that developed amongst recruits nor the genuine enthusiasm for, and joy derived from, the feeling of fellowship and being a part of something meaningful. As noted, many Volunteers had close allegiances with their comrades that predated the revolution and those allegiances were heightened by the

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<sup>47</sup> O'Donnell, *Gates Flew Open*, p.28.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

nature of revolution where men spent large amounts of time together and often suffered hardship together. Furthermore, the danger and risk faced by the active guerrilla fighters of the War of Independence and Civil War could be a binding force that drew them together and made them reliant on one another. Sharing in particular experiences of peril or distress with another man could provide a formative moment for a close friendship.<sup>49</sup> This notion was expressed in *The Irish Volunteer* during discussions of the 'Bearna Baoghail' or, in English, the 'danger gap'.<sup>50</sup> One issue stated that 'every clean, true Irishman must feel that his proper place in this moment is with the men in the danger gap' and that 'the young manhood of Ireland is pressing with wonted valour into the Bearna Bhaoghail. In the danger gap, men are drawn together'.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Ernie O'Malley considered that although it was a 'strange time to make a man gentle', 'men are very kind to each other in danger'.<sup>52</sup> The likelihood that they might die 'in the danger gap' – whether fighting, through hunger strike or being executed – was a particularly significant source of camaraderie. Seamus Babington pondered in retrospect that one reason for the 'extraordinary' friendship amongst IRA men, the 'intensity' of which 'no words' could describe, was 'the continual risk of immediate death'.<sup>53</sup> Previous chapters have discussed the pressures upon men to appear stoic and control emotions in difficult circumstances, and close relationships with other Volunteers facing the same experiences arguably facilitated the maintenance of that performance amongst active guerrillas. Friendship and comradeship provided both distraction and emotional support in a setting where the expression of fear, sadness or scepticism was unacceptable. They may not have readily expressed their emotions to one another but simply the presence of, and conversations

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<sup>49</sup> Kaplan, *The Men We Loved*, p.101.

<sup>50</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II no.71 (15 April 1916), p.3; *The Irish Volunteer* 2.36 (14 August 1915), p.4.

<sup>51</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.II no.37 (21 August 1915), p.4.

<sup>52</sup> E. O'Malley, *The Singing Flame* (Dublin, 1978), p.101.

<sup>53</sup> BMH WS 1595, Seamus Babington, p.39.

with, other men could provide a crutch and some light relief that eased the emotional strain of guerrilla warfare. As Diarmaid Ferriter has argued, the IRA were taking 'huge risks for little or no reward, but the bonds of friendship and common purpose that they shared helped them in their quest'.<sup>54</sup> Brotherhood may have been integral to the performance of republican manly values, but the comfort of comradeship could simultaneously provide some solace from the pressures of performing that martial manly role.

More broadly across the revolutionary period, personal friendships and the wider feeling of comradeship could help to alleviate the hardship and suffering that often came with being a Volunteer. Though he had not taken part in the rebellion, Darrell Figgis was amongst those imprisoned at Richmond Barracks after the Easter Rising, and wrote in 1918 that,

In Richmond the first beginnings appeared of that cementing of brotherhood among the prisoners of war that was afterwards to take so fine a form...a unity and kinship was soon evolved, that mitigated the hardship of our estate and wiped away the sense of danger that hung over us all...our comradeship softened our hardship.<sup>55</sup>

Comradeship – the feeling of being part of something, being supported, good humour, affection and so on – certainly did have a 'softening' effect that made hardship more bearable and therefore helped Volunteers to maintain their spirits, their motivation to fight and their commitment to the cause.<sup>56</sup> Figgis's romantic description is also, however,

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<sup>54</sup> D. Ferriter, 'Introduction', B. Ó Conchubhair, *Dublin's Fighting Story 1916-21: Told By The Men Who Made It* (Cork, 2009), p.19.

<sup>55</sup> D. Figgis, *A Chronicle of Jails* (Dublin, 1918), p.57.

<sup>56</sup> Whilst the majority of Volunteer actions were committed as a group and therefore most recruits experienced Volunteering as a collective endeavour, there were exceptions. For example, although Ernie O'Malley was an experienced guerrilla fighter, for a portion of the War of Independence he was tasked with travelling across the country to train battalions and recounted that the 'strange loneliness of meeting people you liked, and whom you would go away from soon, mirrored the overwhelming transience of life and its precarious tenacity' (*On Another Man's Wound*, p.330). He did certainly experience comradeship during his revolutionary experience (for example during the Four Courts occupation noted on p.243) but it was inconsistent.

indicative of the language of a united, brotherly stoicism that was essential to republican propaganda and its depiction of a defiant and manly fraternity. It was written in 1918 and helped to propel the heroic IRA narrative at a time when the organisation was still framing its self-image and seeking public support. It may have been based on a genuine sense of comforting comradeship, but it cannot be divorced from this ulterior function. This is indeed the case with many published accounts of close brotherhood published during the revolutionary period: they do indicate a genuine experience of affection and togetherness, but are also often framed, and perhaps exaggerated, to fit with and project the republican ideal.

The autograph books that many Volunteers kept in jails provide a more authentic representation of men's relationships whilst imprisoned. As well as rhymes, messages and quotes that evoke republican sacrificial and stoic ideals, they often include direct expressions of affection and comments that affirm the brotherhood of Volunteers. For instance, Seán O'Riada opened a poem written in Frongoch in 1916 with the lines, 'Tonight we clasp each brother's hand, Together in the stranger's land', whilst J. Frawley wrote simply in a 1923 book, 'Friendship is a word even when even when [sic] written on paper warms the heart'.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, prisoners wrote messages to one another that included variations on such phrases as, 'keep me in your memory', 'don't forget to write', 'remember me when this you see' and 'in future far apart, time may bring a change of

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<sup>57</sup> Frongoch Autograph Book [available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/book-pages/frongoch-oct-nov-1916-mcgill-2-page-21/>]; NLI MS 42,236, Autograph book from Newbridge Internment Camp (December, 1923); In many respects, friendships amongst the IRA appear more reminiscent of tender nineteenth century male friendships than later twentieth century equivalents which were marked by 'bonding without intimacy' due to the homophobic stigmatisation of male closeness (L. B. Rubin, *Just Friends: The Role of Friendship in Our Lives* (New York, 1985); P.M. Nardi, "'Seamless Souls": An Introduction to Men's Friendships' in P.M. Nardi (ed.), *Men's Friendships* (Thousand Oaks, 1992), pp.1-14; R. Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore, 2009).

scenes but not a change of hearts'.<sup>58</sup> Though such messages appear in autograph books from across the period, they are especially common in those from the Civil War. This is, perhaps, an indication that the breakdown of brotherhood with the Treaty divide and Civil War (which will be discussed specifically later in the chapter) deepened men's awareness of the value, but also the fragility, of their bonds and encouraged them to hold their friendships dear. Revolutionaries from disparate areas of the country were brought together in prisons and internment camps, which meant many of the relationships forged within them were transient, but that did not necessarily make them any less meaningful. Indeed, whilst Todd Andrews was imprisoned at Mountjoy Jail in 1920, he met a man named Clancy whom he had never met before and would never meet again but who apparently had an 'overwhelmingly mesmeric effect' on him and left an 'indelible impression' that remained vivid over 20 years later.<sup>59</sup>

The impression given in autograph books is often more tender than the narrative of valiant heroism expressed in IRA publications like *An tÓglách*. For example, in an autograph book from Frongoch in 1916, Michael Collins wrote, 'make two words out of "Enough" that won't be enough' then answered his own request with 'One Hug'.<sup>60</sup> Collins is typically associated with toughness and machismo, and it is striking that he wrote this endearing riddle which expresses a desire for affection. Physical touch and tenderness between republican men does not appear to have been considered an aberration and was particularly common during moments of hardship: manly stoicism did not preclude compassion and its bodily expression. As Fearghal McGarry has observed, the army could

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid; NLI MS 27,099, Autograph book from Tintown Internment Camp and Kilkenny Prison (1922-23); NLI MS 42,360, Autograph book from Gormanstown internment camp (1923); NLI MS 50,137, Autograph book from the prison ship 'Argenta', Belfast (1923-24); NLI MS 42,122, Autograph album from Wormwood Scrubs Prison (1918-20).

<sup>59</sup> C.S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1979), p.140.

<sup>60</sup> M. Collins, Frongoch 1916 Autograph Book [available at: <http://www.kilmainhamgaolautographbooks.ie/book-pages/frongoch-1916-partial-page-2/>].

act as an arena in which 'the expression of love for one's fellow man' was 'not merely tolerated but encouraged'.<sup>61</sup> When soldiers were placed in the confined and often distressing environment of the prison, expressions of love, support and affection became even more permissible and commonplace. In a letter to his wife on the eve of his execution after the Easter Rising, Michael Mallin wrote that his friend William Partridge was 'more than a brother' to him and 'kept him close in his arms' so that he might have 'comfort and warmth'.<sup>62</sup> Ernie O'Malley similarly recalled in his War of Independence memoir that he once held the hand of a scared young man stood next to him in a prison identification parade to comfort him and stop his shivering.<sup>63</sup> In the absence of families and partners, imprisoned men could provide solace for one another in difficult times through physical touch.

In less trying situations, meanwhile, such as in the relative freedom of Frongoch internment camp, playful physical encounters were common amongst the Volunteers. Joe Good, for instance, recalled that during their internment he and Michael Collins would 'relieve the monotony by rough horseplay'.<sup>64</sup> Collins was known in particular for his love of wrestling with friends. Seán MacEoin recalled a wrestling match between him and Collins which he felt had immediately cemented their friendship: 'Now from that moment the friendship [between] himself and myself remained till his death'.<sup>65</sup> MacEoin conceived of wrestling as bonding, and presents the match as a formative moment in their relationship. For Joseph Lawless meanwhile, one of his foremost memories of his time at Knutsford Jail was the 'healthy animal spirits exhibited in the roughest of good humoured

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<sup>61</sup> F. McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: A Self-Made Hero* (Oxford, 2005), pp.167-8.

<sup>62</sup> UCDA P67/6, 'Events of Easter Week', *Catholic Bulletin* (July 1917).

<sup>63</sup> O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound*, p.301.

<sup>64</sup> J. Good, *Enchanted by Dreams: The Journal of a Revolutionary* (Kerry, 1996), pp.93-4.

<sup>65</sup> Hart, *Mick*, p.142-3.



horseplay'.<sup>66</sup> When he had first arrived there he had a hand injury incurred from the Easter Rising and regretted that he was therefore unable to fully take part in the 'venting' of 'animal spirits' in horseplay and games.<sup>67</sup> The expression and enactment of comradeship through such communal activities was an important aspect of life for many imprisoned men, so it is not difficult to imagine the ill-feeling that may have arisen as a result of being left out of the brotherhood as it was constituted in that moment. 'Horseplay' and wrestling were also a means for men to display their muscularity and manliness in front of their peers. There was indeed a fine line between good-natured fun and physical antagonism, and both Lawless and O'Donnell refer to times when wrestling went 'beyond a joke' and developed into a fight.<sup>68</sup>

It is important to keep in mind here that men's expressions of physical affection and play-fighting cannot simply be taken as an indication of repressed homosexual desire, although the conservatism of Irish Catholic society at the time meant it was likely that if men did have those desires they would be compelled to keep them hidden.<sup>69</sup> There was certainly a significant level of taboo surrounding homosexuality, as illustrated in the nationalist community's unwillingness to accept that Roger Casement's posthumously uncovered 'Black Diaries', which documented his homosexual encounters, were genuine.<sup>70</sup> The average republican wanted their heroes to fit with an idealised conception of heterosexual manhood. That heterosexuality was not, however, intended to be

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<sup>66</sup> BMH WS 1043, Joseph Lawless, p.168.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.162.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.191; O'Donnell, *Gates Flew Open*, p.189.

<sup>69</sup> See McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p.168 for a discussion of homosexuality in the IRA through the lens of Eoin O'Duffy's sexuality. McGarry writes that 'there is little reason to believe that homosexuality was less widespread in the Irish military than other armies' and refers to one former flying column member who 'claimed to have been propositioned by his comrades on at least four occasions'.

<sup>70</sup> Roy Foster has noted that 'loyal comrades' invented connections with women for Casement, and his fellow martyr Patrick Pearse who was also accused of having homosexual tendencies, in order to dispel any of the claims (R.F. Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923* (London, 2015), p.139); E. Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots: St. Enda's and the Cult of Boyhood* (Cork, 2004), p.138.

outwardly expressed and sex in general is notably, though not entirely, absent from men's accounts of the revolutionary period.<sup>71</sup> Todd Andrews was conscious in retrospect that the omission of sex was rather unusual, recalling that at Frongoch, 'sex was never discussed. Considering the age group, it would be difficult to persuade a foreigner that this was so'.<sup>72</sup> Due to the lack of explicit reference to homosexuality, or sexuality at all, in sources relating to imprisonment and the revolution more broadly, it may be tempting to read into instances of male-to-male bodily interaction. But applying contemporary assumptions about the meaning of men's physical engagement with one another to the past is simply conjecture.<sup>73</sup> Instances of physical intimacy between imprisoned and interned revolutionary Irishmen can be taken as symbols of care, affection and love, but not as necessarily an indication of suppressed homosexual inclinations. This is not to say that these desires did not exist, but that the sources do not contain enough evidence to infer that they did.

Horseplay was ultimately a means of passing the time and finding fun in a time of adversity. Friendship and comradeship made the tribulations of the revolutionary period more bearable, but they also made the experience actively enjoyable. Indeed, Liam Deasy paid tribute in his Civil War memoir to those who 'made life in prison not only possible but memorable'.<sup>74</sup> From the very beginning, the joys of comradeship and togetherness

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<sup>71</sup> This appears to have been a trait specific to the men of the revolutionary period, rather than to the broader tradition of Irish republicanism. John Mitchel wrote in his infamous *Jail Journal* published in 1854 that having a woman to 'make love to...would make a great difference' to his suffering (p.60); Roy Foster also refers to a 'sexually adventurous aspect to the revolutionary temperament before 1916' which seemed to 'disappear with alacrity' afterwards (*Vivid Faces*, p.140). He also, interestingly, notes that it is easier to track same sex relationships among Irish nationalist women than men (*Vivid Faces*, p.133).

<sup>72</sup> C.S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1979), p.182.

<sup>73</sup> Richard Godbeer's book, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love Between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore, 2009), includes a good discussion on this issue, where the author advocates that historians ought to set aside the assumption that 'expressions of loving devotion must imply a desire for sexual intimacy' (pp.2-3); Elaine Sisson has summarised that the posthumous 'heterosexualising' of Patrick Pearse does not in itself indicate the 'fact' of his homosexuality (*Pearse's Patriots*, p.138).

<sup>74</sup> Deasy, *Brother Against Brother*, p.124.

imbued the act of Volunteering with a sense of adventure and gaiety. Joseph Lawless, for example, recalled that as he and his pals prepared to join the Easter rebellion on Monday 24 April 1916, there was such an 'atmosphere of good-humoured joking' and such a 'sense of comradeship' that it made 'the food taste even better to our keen appetites than it was'.<sup>75</sup> In periods of hardship, meanwhile, good humour helped to alleviate men's suffering. During his 41 day hunger strike in 1923, Peadar O'Donnell and his fellow strikers would apparently 'joke' together and 'laughed at [their] hunger'.<sup>76</sup> As has been established in earlier chapters, light-heartedness in the face of severe conditions and in high risk situations signified stoicism and was a cornerstone in the performance of republican martial manliness. Proponents of republicanism could project the impression that men suffering together, but resolute, united and cheerful nonetheless, was noble national comradeship in action. This is not to say it was artificial however, and maintaining good humour was also a coping mechanism for hunger strikers that relied on a feeling of friendship and mutual support.

Men may have become especially reliant on each during hunger strikes, but the prison experience more broadly was one where a sense of community and the feeling of being in it together were essential to the maintenance of a man's fortitude. In the simplest sense, it was a comfort to know that they were not suffering alone. As P.S. O'Hegarty summarised in 1922, 'There is nothing to hearten a man who is struggling against the odds as well as the knowledge of the fact that other men were carrying on the fight also'.<sup>77</sup> The notion that friendship and fraternity eases personal strife is, of course, a familiar one and its expression amongst republican prisoners predated the revolutionary period. Tom

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<sup>75</sup> BMH WS 1043, Joseph Lawless, p.60.

<sup>76</sup> O'Donnell, *Gates Flew Open*, p.196.

<sup>77</sup> P.S. O'Hegarty, *A Short Memoir of Terence MacSwiney* (New York, 1922), p.56; O'Hegarty himself never went to prison.

Clarke, for example, had written that imprisonment was a ‘test of manhood’ and that ‘the sterling friendship of manly comrades’ alleviated his suffering.<sup>78</sup> He asserted that the British authorities has failed to ‘crush’ he and his fellow prisoners for they ‘stood loyally by each other in a spirit of friendship – aye, with love and sympathy’.<sup>79</sup>

More broadly across the revolutionary period, the feeling of being part of a group, of camaraderie and togetherness, could provide Volunteers with a sense of personal gratification and fulfilment. For Todd Andrews, the ‘feeling that comes from belonging to an exclusive club’ was ‘universally satisfying’.<sup>80</sup> Eoin O’Duffy, meanwhile, found in Volunteering a ‘sense of belonging’ which he had ‘strived for since childhood’ and described the camaraderie he experienced as ‘nothing more than forgetfulness of self and love of unit’.<sup>81</sup> Even those who were not typically predisposed to geniality and gaiety could find the wider sense of togetherness to be enriching. MaryAnn Valiulis has, for example, argued that Richard Mulcahy never lost his ‘sense of reserve’ or engaged in the ‘pranks’ and ‘free and easy camaraderie’ which characterised Michael Collins’s relationships.<sup>82</sup> Yet, ‘his acceptance in the Volunteers and then the IRA eased his self-consciousness and gave him a feeling of relaxed camaraderie and an important sense of belonging’ and he therefore ‘long remembered this esprit de corps’.<sup>83</sup> Mulcahy’s forte was organisation and attention to detail, which he utilised in his position as IRA Chief-of-Staff.<sup>84</sup> He was therefore not one of those who had joined the Volunteers for a sense of

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<sup>78</sup> T. J. Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon’s Prison Life* (Dublin, 1922) [chapters were serialised in *Irish Freedom* in 1912 and 1913], p.6, p.55.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>80</sup> C.S. Andrews, *Dublin Made Me: An Autobiography* (Dublin, 1979), p.99.

<sup>81</sup> McGarry, *Eoin O’Duffy*, p.168.

<sup>82</sup> M.G. Valiulis, *Portrait of a Revolutionary: General Richard Mulcahy and the Founding of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1992), p.8.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p.30.

kinship and comradesly adventure but still, his experience of belonging and camaraderie was a satisfying and consoling aspect of his revolutionary life.

Personal friendships and the wider sense of brotherhood could, then, be a source of great joy for the revolutionaries. Many former Volunteers looked back fondly on the support of friends, the moments of fun and thrill, and the feeling of belonging to a united collective. Accounts of camaraderie published retrospectively are indicative of that fondness, but they also formed part of a constructed narrative of heroic adventure. Published in 1924 and 1949 respectively, Dan Breen's and Tom Barry's memoirs were classics of the genre of IRA memoirs intended for wide readership and to entertain. There is no doubt that each man did develop and enjoy close friendships during their lives as guerrillas, but their accounts also work to peddle a romantic ideal of manly virtue, brotherhood and adventure. Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* was written very much in terms of, and therefore at times reads as a tribute to, his close friend Seán Treacy who died during a shootout in 1920. The men had met at eighteen but from the moment of their meeting, Breen felt that he had known Treacy all his life; their 'kindred spirits clicked from the beginning'.<sup>85</sup> The two of them formed half of a close-knit group with Seán Hogan and Seamus Robinson. According to Breen, the four of them 'felt like a group of schoolboys on holiday' and, when they were together, 'all the dark clouds seemed to scatter'.<sup>86</sup> This of course plays into the popular trope that close bonds and good humour with fighting comrades could mask the tribulations of war. After the Soloheadbeg ambush, the foursome were separated for a few weeks and Breen's memoir gives the following description of the moment they reunited: 'I need hardly say that our joy at the

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<sup>85</sup> Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, p.21.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p.55.; Strangely and conversely, the adjutant general of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Southern Division of the IRA in fact appealed to Sinn Féin in November 1921 'to strengthen the moral right of the IRA by counteracting the general opinion that we are schoolboys out for a holiday' [quoted in Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.170].

reunion was unbounded. Although it was only a few weeks since we had parted at Soloheadbeg, we felt like brothers who were meeting after years of separation. We continued our night's march, linked arm-in-arm'.<sup>87</sup> Here, Breen emphasises the exceptional nature of guerrilla war where everything was intensified and also suggests that Volunteers experienced a level of friendship, and a level of anguish caused by separation, that was unlike anything encountered in civilian life. This again worked to convey the romantic vision of a heroic, brotherly adventure story that had become central to popular republican depictions of the War of Independence.

The narrative given in Tom Barry's *Guerrilla Days in Ireland* is not quite as romanticised as Breen's memoir, but still it is typical of popular IRA memoirs for it emphasises the 'splendid unity' of the West Cork IRA, who were apparently a 'happy family bound together by close ties' and provided 'an example of good comradeship that could not be surpassed'.<sup>88</sup> The selective and constructed nature of his account is, however, especially clear because Peter Hart found that Barry, who had been a sergeant in the British Army until early 1919, was in fact something of an outsider in West Cork. He was disliked and distrusted by prominent IRA families and refused entry to the Bandon IRA numerous times before being able to 'work his way in'.<sup>89</sup> This was not, of course, mentioned at all in his portrayal of events, which foregrounded camaraderie and close personal bonds. The distinction between the relations that Hart identified and the impression given in Barry's memoir is indicative of the potential for erasure and positive spin in retrospective depictions of Volunteer brotherhood.

Notions of unity, comradeship and friendship were therefore essential to the image that the IRA sought to project during the revolutionary period, and to the depiction

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p.48.

<sup>88</sup> Barry, *Guerrilla Days*, p.113.

<sup>89</sup> Hart, *The I.R.A. & Its Enemies*, p.31, p.220.

of the independence struggle that was peddled afterwards. Performances of brotherhood were actively fostered and actively shared to a wider audience, but they were also a genuine feature of the Volunteer experience. The discursive validation of male friendship, long held ideals of republican brotherhood, the close proximity and amount of time men spent together, and the comfort that friendship could provide, all came together to produce an atmosphere of fraternity. Moreover, the comfort and heartening effect that derived from friendship and comradeship helped to keep up Volunteer morale which in turn made it easier for individuals to keep up the enduringly stoic and courageous role that was expected of them. The physical and emotional toll taken on active guerrillas could be, at least partially, relieved by the solace of close bonds with other men and this made it easier for Volunteers to maintain outward appearances of manliness.

### Imprisonment and the pressures of brotherhood

The elevated position of brotherhood and camaraderie in republican discourses, as well as specific exhortations about the expected fraternal conduct of Volunteers, put pressure on recruits to perform commitment to, and enthusiasm for, the community of brothers in arms. That pressure became especially acute in prisons and internment camps as hundreds of republican men came together and were expected to perform stoicism, good humour and resistance in a confined setting. The romanticised image of Volunteers standing together against adversity was essential to republican propaganda during the revolutionary period, and to the popular narrative presented afterwards. Prison accounts published during and immediately after the revolution tended to brush aside the nuances of prison relations in favour of peddling the impression of an idyllic, unwavering harmony amongst the men. William Brennan-Whitmore's *With the Irish in Frongoch*, which was originally published in 1917 shortly after his release, typifies this approach.

He described the situation of ‘hundreds of full-blooded men as different in their individual temperament as in their provincial and even county characteristics’ as a perfect storm where division and hostility were, under any other circumstances, bound to occur.<sup>90</sup> And yet, he boasted, during the many months the men were at Frongoch, ‘not a single quarrel ever occurred among us’.<sup>91</sup> He admits there may have been ‘differences of opinion’ and ‘keen debate’ but both sides would always ‘bow to the discipline’ and unity and peace would prevail.<sup>92</sup> As this section will illustrate, the reality was significantly more nuanced and appearances of unity were often the product of pressures to conform and the conscious misrepresentation of prison life to facilitate propaganda.

Thousands of Volunteers and Sinn Féiners of different personalities, backgrounds, priorities and temperaments experienced imprisonment and internment during the revolutionary period. It therefore follows that many of them experienced or witnessed conflict, disparity and disengagement. As Seán Prendergast wrote tentatively of his time at Frongoch, it ‘would not be right...to convey the impression that everything in the garden was lovely’.<sup>93</sup> William Murphy has indeed concluded that the experience of imprisonment was ‘enjoyable for some, but unbearably claustrophobic for others’ and ‘neither uniformity or unity should be assumed’.<sup>94</sup> A number of accounts indeed testify to the existence of individuals within prison populations who did not engage with the elevated republican ideal of unified brotherhood and chose to keep themselves to themselves. Joseph Lawless admitted that despite the ‘single mindedness of the general body of the prisoners’, there was always to be found certain individuals who did not mix

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<sup>90</sup> W.J. Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish at Frongoch* (Cork, 2013), p.75.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> BMH WS 755, Prendergast, p.206.

<sup>94</sup> Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish*, p.67.



well or whose characters were 'incompatible' with the majority.<sup>95</sup> Whilst interned at Frongoch, Robert Holland met a man who made no friends, was very hard to speak to and 'seemed to think himself out of place'.<sup>96</sup> Mort O'Connell was also amongst the internees and, in a letter to James Ryan, referred to himself as 'one of the black sheep' at the camp.<sup>97</sup> Pierce McCan, meanwhile, described in some detail an elderly man at Richmond Barracks who rarely spoke to anyone, spent his whole day killing lice and who the other prisoners referred to as 'dumb dumb'.<sup>98</sup> These individuals, however anomalous they may have been, detracted from the ideal of an entirely jolly, united and committed body of men that republican propagandists wished to portray. Between such 'outsiders' who did not engage with the camaraderie and those like Brennan-Whitmore who did truly and fully get behind the brotherly ideal, there surely existed a third category of men who had rather ambiguous feelings towards it all but felt compelled to appear enthusiastic. Ernest Blythe, for example, lamented that in Reading Jail in 1916 he had to endure the 'punishment' that 'every bloke is writing rhyme, and I must praise it every time'.<sup>99</sup> His comment was likely rather facetious, but does nonetheless point to the pressures of conforming to a united and supportive ideal and the manifestation of those pressures in insincere expressions.

Amongst those that did engage with the collective, petty and trivial conflicts were not uncommon. In an indicative example, Dennis McCullough wrote at length in a letter from Gloucester prison to Agnes Ryan about the 'bad mood' he was in that night after feeling that there had been some injustice against him in a bridge tournament.<sup>100</sup> He felt

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<sup>95</sup> BMH WS 1043, Lawless, p.178.

<sup>96</sup> BMH WS 371, Holland, p.27.

<sup>97</sup> UCDA P88/38, Letter from Mort O'Connell to James Ryan [undated].

<sup>98</sup> NLI MS 45,924, Pierce McCan 'Three months in England's prisons' [1916].

<sup>99</sup> NLI MS 19,924, Ernest Blythe in J.J O'Connell's prison album 'Book of Cells' compiled in Reading Gaol after the Easter Rising (1916).

<sup>100</sup> UCDA P120/54(7), Dennis McCullough to Agnes Ryan (10 July 1918).

that his fellow inmates were 'not very sportsmanlike' and chose to take no further part in the games.<sup>101</sup> In an acknowledgement of the pettiness of it all, he concluded with the sentence, 'so we go, making little things into grievances for ourselves and worrying over nothing'.<sup>102</sup> Earlier in the letter he had commented on how 'touchy and irritable' the inmates had become 'when forced to live with people in a community like this'.<sup>103</sup> In Frongoch, according to Seán Prendergast, the main source of these 'minor clashes, differences of opinion, arguments, and growls' was the question of rank and status.<sup>104</sup> In some institutions, formal military hierarchies were established through elections that replicated those on the outside. In others, informal hierarchies came to the fore. During 1916, 1917 and 1918 in particular, the highest status was afforded to those who had taken the most active roles in the Easter Rising. Men who had not been in Dublin during Easter week, like Darrell Figgis, could feel that they 'faded into insignificance besides the simplest follower that had borne the heat of the day'.<sup>105</sup> Louis J. Walsh similarly recalled that the leading men at Frongoch mostly resided in Hut II, and 'humble denizens' like himself envied their 'exalted position'.<sup>106</sup> The fact that a hut was reserved specifically for leading men is an indication of how military and social hierarchies could be replicated in internment camps in particular, where inmates were free to form their own structures. Whilst Figgis and Walsh did not seem especially perturbed by their lower status, Thomas Wilson recalled 'the dissatisfaction felt by the majority of prisoners against a clique of men assuming control'.<sup>107</sup> Thomas Peppard also seemed resentful of the division of prison labour at Lewes where the 'bigger shots' like Éamon de Valera assigned

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> BMH WS 755, Prendergast, p.206.

<sup>105</sup> Figgis, *Chronicle of Jails*, p.45.

<sup>106</sup> Walsh, *On My Keeping*, p.62.

<sup>107</sup> BMH WS 176, Thomas Wilson, p.14.

themselves the least strenuous roles such as tending to the garden.<sup>108</sup> The existence of these hierarchies during internment and the tensions they created undermines the impression given in many contemporary republican publications that the men at Frongoch constituted an egalitarian brotherhood enduring together through the same experiences.<sup>109</sup>

Even for those who engaged in, enjoyed and propounded the values of comradeship and friendship in prison the most, they were never a panacea. It helped to ease their experience, but it did not change the fact that they were still separated from their loved ones and devoid of their freedom. In his 1921 memoir, Louis J. Walsh professed the ‘fine spirit of comradeship’ that existed among very different men who came together as one and praised the ‘courage and cheerfulness’ of the prisoners as ‘amazing’.<sup>110</sup> Yet, four pages later he conceded that ‘still gaol is gaol...It dulls your brain, deadens your senses, and humiliates you, whilst the loneliness and helplessness of your position are galling’.<sup>111</sup> Joseph Lawless similarly argued that whilst the ‘staunch comradeship of our fellows did, indeed, infuse a great feeling of comfort’ and this certainly eased their hardship, as time passed in confinement, ‘it became harder and harder to be content with such limited liberty’.<sup>112</sup> Comradeship may have provided some respite but the difficulties of prison life still put a strain on men’s moods and therefore on their ability to perform manly good-humour and stoicism.

Regardless of the extent of conflict, despondency and disengagement from the collective that occurred in prisons, the image presented to outsiders remained a harmonious one. In his 1918 memoir, Darrell Figgis – rather surprisingly – admitted to

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<sup>108</sup> Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish*, p.68.

<sup>109</sup> Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish at Frongoch; An tÓglách* vol.I no.10 (1 February 1919), p.1.

<sup>110</sup> Walsh, *On My Keeping*, p.30.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* p.34.

<sup>112</sup> BMH WS 1043, Lawless, p.188.

the conscious concealment of discord. He spent six months in Reading Jail and admits, rather tentatively, that men 'occasionally got upon one another's nerves'.<sup>113</sup> However, any disagreement was consciously hidden: a principle they 'never let down' was that 'no outsider saw cleavages' among them.<sup>114</sup> The reassuring letters that men wrote home from prison, discussed in the last chapter, were one means to achieve this. They could be developed into embellished propaganda in the form of articles and speeches attesting to the enduring, united manliness of republican prisoners. The romantic vision of their heroic fortitude was encapsulated in a 1920 issue of *An tÓglách* which stated that 'nobody can read of the heroic fight put up by our comrades in Mountjoy Prison for prisoner of war treatment without a thrill of pride. Their triumph, in the face of the menace of what seemed inevitable death, was wonderful'.<sup>115</sup> Prisons became 'a pulpit, a soapbox, a stage', but not all were content with the propaganda emanating from their experiences.<sup>116</sup> Michael Hopkinson has noted that one prisoner complained during the Civil War that journals like *Éire* and *Sinn Féin* were printing exaggerated 'sob stuff that even *we* do not read'.<sup>117</sup> This distinction between the reality of their experiences and the romanticised image presented to the outside world is indicative of the elaborate republican propaganda machine which sought to show the British that republican men were united, resolute and could not be defeated, and to show the general Irish, and sometimes wider world, audience that they were noble, respectable and worthy of support in their suffering at the hands of a tyrannical oppressor.

Men were also, however, engaged in a performance of brotherhood for one another: peer approval mattered and there was pressure from fellow republicans to live

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<sup>113</sup> Figgis, *Chronicle of Jails*, p.126.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.II no.9 (15 April 1920), p.4.

<sup>116</sup> Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish*, p.9.

<sup>117</sup> M. Hopkinson, *Green Against Green: The Irish Civil War* (Dublin, 2004), p.269.

up to the manly ideal by engaging fully with the collective and with expressions of camaraderie. Military formations, Mass, protests and hunger strikes were some of the means by which prisoners created this pervading image of unity. Whilst many sincerely enjoyed the feeling of togetherness that came with such acts, they also took place in an environment where dissent from the community and popular opinion was difficult to express. The 'communal pressure' of the prison was inescapable.<sup>118</sup> Volunteers were continually reminded that they belonged to a noble body of heroes, doing their duty for the nation after years of having their masculinity suppressed by a dominating enemy.<sup>119</sup> Part of that duty was to maintain the appearance of unanimity and collective perseverance sustained by fraternal bonds and devotion to the nation.

One incident that occurred at Frongoch in 1916 demonstrates particularly well the pressures upon men to conform to the majority and to display their selfless commitment to the collective. During routine roll calls, the internment camp authorities had been making attempts to identify any men in the camp who had connections with Britain and could therefore be liable for conscription to the Great War. In order to save any of the internees this fate, the majority of men in the camp engaged in an act of resistance by refusing to answer to their names. But a significant minority of 184 men did reveal themselves and retained the privileges, such as visits and letters, that the others had had revoked.<sup>120</sup> Joe Good, whose memoir is marked by more scepticism and criticism than most, acknowledged that this issue caused the 'first cleavage' amongst the interned men, but other accounts, peddling the rhetoric of unity, suggest it was an almost

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<sup>118</sup> J. Dolan Stover, *A revolution within: loyalty, treason and the Irish Revolution, 1913-1921* (PhD thesis), (Trinity College Dublin, 2011), p.214.

<sup>119</sup> This notion is discussed in detail in R. Mytton, 'Chapter One: Resurrecting Irish Manliness' in 'Nationalist Masculinities and the Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916' [M.A. dissertation] (University of Sheffield, 2016), p.12-23.

<sup>120</sup> Murphy, *Political Imprisonment and the Irish*, p.69.; A further 38 men later revealed themselves in order to restore their privileges.

unanimous show of solidarity.<sup>121</sup> Brennan-Whitmore recalled the first day of their protest, when the internees banded together in protest to sing ‘The Soldier’s Song’.<sup>122</sup> By coincidence, six mothers and fathers had travelled from Ireland to Wales that day to visit their interned sons. Despite this, every one of the men apparently remained in this ‘singing army of heroes’ and continued to refuse to identify themselves ‘even for the joy of being clasped again in the embrace of father and mother’.<sup>123</sup> Brennan-Whitmore took this as an indication of just how committed these men were to the cause and to one another, so committed that they were happy to forgo seeing their parents who had travelled very far to see them. It is, of course, not possible to assign a motivation to the actions of these unnamed men, but it can reasonably be assumed that their commitment



Figure 8: NLI NPA LOB1, *Internees at Frongoch Internment Camp (1916)*.

to obstructing conscription was not the sole factor influencing their decision to stay in

<sup>121</sup> Good, *Enchanted by Dreams*, p.89; Brennan-Whitmore (p.174) writes that ‘very few’ insisted on giving their names whilst Lawless (BMH WS 1043) recounted that one-third of the internees gave their names but the majority of these were old or unwell men who had been urged to give their names for their own sake, or men who had been ‘tricked’ into giving their name.

<sup>122</sup> Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish in Frongoch*, p.152.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p.153.

the crowd. To go to their loved ones would have required them to openly dissent from a large and raucous body of men united as one in the name of a cause that was considered to be sacred. Whatever their own stance on the situation, they would have surely felt an immense amount of pressure to conform to the collective and to fulfil the narrative of united brotherhood in order to avoid any of the potential repercussions of departing from the group.

A less ostentatious display of collective resistance to prison authorities occurred at Lewes Prison in 1917. 21 year old Volunteer Richard Kelly had been confined to his cell and given restricted food rations as punishment for laughing and talking in the workshop despite being warned to stop.<sup>124</sup> In protest at his treatment, the rest of the prisoners at Lewes refused to do any work because, as Eoin MacNeill stated, 'one man being punished meant all being punished'.<sup>125</sup> A prison governor who observed the incident informed the Prison Commission in London that the men's Sinn Féin oath bound them to 'act as one man'.<sup>126</sup> The actions of the prisoners was indeed a perfect representation of the collectivity and brotherhood that republican leaders hoped to foster and display. Whilst it was a genuine act of unity and support for Kelly, any sceptical individual would likely have felt compelled to join in. Again, to dissent would have been to undermine the performance expected of Volunteers.

The pressures to follow the actions of the majority were sharpened during hunger strikes.<sup>127</sup> Todd Andrews asserted that 'it is an error to think that hunger strikers participated voluntarily' as the 'moral pressure deriving from the wish and the need to show solidarity with one's comrades is so powerful as to amount to an order'.<sup>128</sup> He

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<sup>124</sup> J. Dolan Stover, 'Irish Political Prisoner Culture, 1916-1923', *CrossCurrents* 64 (2014), p.91.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>128</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.145.

posited that it would take a man of ‘exceptional character’ to refuse to join in a strike that his comrades were involved in.<sup>129</sup> This is an interesting reversal of the common republican narrative which considered those who did go on hunger strike as the most courageous of men.<sup>130</sup> Peadar O’Donnell also referred to ‘a sort of moral conscription’ that men felt once others began a strike, as they felt they were letting down their comrades if they did not join them in their suffering.<sup>131</sup> He added that, ‘if his pals don’t say he has [let them down,] some of their friends or his enemies will say it’.<sup>132</sup> There was, then, a three-tiered pressure to join one’s comrades in striking: the internal guilt of not participating, the calls to join the strike from those already engaged in it, and the accusations of shirking from outsiders. This was all exacerbated by the wider compulsion to adhere to the sacrificial masculine ideal that pervaded republicanism. For imprisoned Volunteers, the typical social pressure to conform was sharpened by the confined prison environment and by the specific pressures that came with being a republican soldier. The brotherhood of republicans was a ‘surrogate for the nation’ itself, and Volunteers were therefore expected and pressured to display their commitment to it in prisons, just as they were pressured to display their courage in fighting for it on the outside.<sup>133</sup> If they did not, their Volunteer credentials, and therefore their manliness, would be called into question.

### The breakdown of brotherhood: the Treaty

When the Truce that ended the Irish War of Independence was called on 11 July 1921, many were elated and celebrated the victory with their friends. Charlie Dalton and his

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> This trope may in fact have been a motivating factor for some men who did join the strikes: they wanted to receive the acclaim and prestige that was assigned to starving prisoners.

<sup>131</sup> O’Donnell, *Gates Flew Open*, p.193.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> S. Benton, ‘Women Disarmed: The Militarisation of Politics in Ireland 1913-1923’, *Feminist Review* 50 (1995), p.157.



comrades, for example, were apparently 'in such a state of excitement and exultation' that they 'could do nothing but grin'.<sup>134</sup> The truce was heralded as a success of the noble Irish brotherhood, who had finally fulfilled the aim of centuries. *An tÓglách* proclaimed

The courage and skill of the soldiers of Ireland have achieved wonderful things and brought about results which some years ago few Irish people dared to hope for. It is generally admitted that never in the history of the world has a guerrilla warfare against heavy odds been fought with such organisation, discipline, persistence, skills and success as the Irish War of Independence.<sup>135</sup>

The truce did also, however, lead to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty which heralded the beginning of a breakdown in unity and a destabilisation in the position of brotherhood as a central tenet of the republican imagination. The sense of fraternity had been felt more acutely for the military men, whose everyday lives had been so closely intertwined with and dependent on those of their comrades, than it had for some politicians, and this became evident in the positions taken on the Treaty. Due to the close allegiances amongst the soldiers and the culture of collectivity that had been instilled in them, individual Volunteers' acceptance or rejection of the Treaty tended to be heavily influenced by their comrades and leaders. Their decisions were regularly expressed and understood in collective, rather than individual terms.<sup>136</sup> Volunteer's decisions cannot, therefore, be read simply as indications of their political convictions but also as a product of social processes, personal loyalties and military camaraderie. It is not difficult to imagine that, for instance, an individual would be reluctant to support the Treaty if all of their friends and comrades, and the leaders they most admired, were firmly against it, or vice versa. Michael Hopkinson has detailed this phenomenon. In particular, he argues that

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<sup>134</sup> C. Dalton, *With the Dublin Brigade (1917-1921)*, p.174.

<sup>135</sup> *An tÓglách* vol.III no.20 (5 August 1921), p.1.

<sup>136</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.264.

it is unlikely that the Treaty would have been implemented if so many IRA men, particularly those in GHQ, were not personally influenced by Collins, with many stating that 'what was good enough for Collins' was good enough for them, rather than considering the Treaty's finer points.<sup>137</sup> Mary MacSwiney concluded that Collins alone was responsible for the split, because so many young men were happy to follow whatever decision he made.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, the transcript of the Dáil debates on 21 December 1921 shows that MacSwiney's question 'If Mick Collins went to hell in the morning, would you follow him there?' was responded to with 'cries of "Yes"' as well as "No".<sup>139</sup> Ernie O'Malley similarly lamented in retrospect that many 'sincere Republicans followed [Collins] blindly' and more broadly concluded that 'personalities rather than principles seemed to have swayed many'.<sup>140</sup> Peter Hart has noted the 'power of cliques and territory' and the influence of Collins in the Treaty decision of Seán Hales: whilst at home in Cork he had been opposed to the Treaty like his brother Tom, but the Dáil debates in Dublin 'brought him into the orbit of Collins and his expatriate West Cork cronies' and from then on he supported it.<sup>141</sup> Many faced conflict between their political opinions and their personal loyalties. According to Batt O'Connor, Seán Moylan favoured the Treaty in private conversation but said he would vote with De Valera as he could 'never let him down'.<sup>142</sup> At a local level, leading or popular IRA members could shape the position taken by men in their area. For instance two different members of Dublin No.1 Brigade 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion stated that the whole unit 'went Free State' because their commanding officer Tom Ennis

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<sup>137</sup> Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p.40.

<sup>138</sup> M. MacSwiney, Dáil Éireann Debate (21 December 1921).

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> O'Malley, *Singing Flame*, pp.85-6.

<sup>141</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.200.

<sup>142</sup> UCDA P68/4, Letter from Batt O'Connor to Máire (28 January 1922).

had done so.<sup>143</sup> One believed that it was Ennis's personality that 'swung' the battalion.<sup>144</sup> This is not to suggest that the majority of men were simply following others in their responses to the Treaty, but it does point to the power of the bonds between IRA men who had fought together up to that point. The ideal of united brotherhood had been instilled into them and it was difficult to discard that ideal when it came to the Treaty. In some cases, men chose to separate themselves from the army entirely rather than pick a side: the Ballinadee Volunteers could not face choosing between Tom and Seán Hales, so instead made the collective decision to resign.<sup>145</sup> For such men, their republicanism had always revolved around the collective and they would rather cease to be a Volunteer than to break their bonds with supporters of one side or the other. It was not necessarily that their brotherhood eclipsed their republican principles but that their relationships were part and parcel of these principles and could not be undermined.

At the outset of the Dáil debates over the Treaty, which exposed the irreconcilability of the two sides, the 'fixed determination' of the IRA was that 'the comradeship of the years of the Black and Tan campaign must be unbroken'.<sup>146</sup> The realisation that that position was increasingly untenable caused much anguish, in large part because the brotherhood that had once felt so sacred and everlasting was now fragmenting. Individual friendships and the wider feeling of unity had been a source of comfort and joy, and it was painful to see both becoming fraught. Roy Foster has indeed argued that 'the sundering of bonds between people who had forged close relationships in the brotherhood of guerrilla campaigns' was 'one of the most traumatic aspects' of the split and ensuing conflict.<sup>147</sup> Close relationships that had been forged long before the

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<sup>143</sup> Hopkinson, *Green against Green*, p.44.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.208.

<sup>147</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p.140.

events of the revolutionary period were also broken by the Treaty, so for many the trauma stemmed not only from the sundering of bonds with comrades in arms, but the sundering of bonds with childhood friends and relations. That trauma was often, however, only revealed long after the event when the wounds had begun to heal. There is little to indicate that Volunteers readily expressed the emotional toll taken by the Treaty split at the time, but retrospective accounts tell a different story. Liam Deasy, for example, described the 1921 Dáil debates over the Treaty as ‘unforgettable and most distressing’ as he had to listen to the ‘bitter recriminations’ of men ‘who a few short months before were fighting as comrades side by side’.<sup>148</sup> ‘Gone was the old chivalry and *esprit de corps*’, and this shattered Deasy’s many ‘dreams, hopes and ideals’.<sup>149</sup> Todd Andrews was similarly ‘shattered’ by the debates as he saw men he held in extremely high esteem to be ‘malevolent and vicious’.<sup>150</sup> This brought him down from his ‘plane of emotional idealism’.<sup>151</sup> That idealism was indeed a component of the trauma of the split: men had truly believed in the sanctity of their leaders, and in the absolute strength of the collective they were a part of, and who, in the Easter Rising and War of Independence, had been through so much together.

Emotional expressions about the breakdown of unity were made during the debates themselves, but tended to come from the political rather than the military men and read more as rhetorical devices than sincere articulations of inner feeling. On the anti-Treaty side, Sceilg proclaimed that he had found himself ‘cursing the hour’ he entered political life because ‘that splendid spirit of comradeship’ that had marked republicanism such a short time ago was now absent.<sup>152</sup> When Seán T. O’ Kelly outlined

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<sup>148</sup> Deasy, *Brother Against Brother*, p.32.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.207.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> J.J. O’Kelly, Dáil Éireann Debate (17 December 1921).

his anti-Treaty position meanwhile, he maintained his 'love and respect' for Arthur Griffith, who he was 'very sorry' to be opposed to.<sup>153</sup> On the other side, Kevin O'Higgins began his statement in support of the settlement by stating that it had been 'the purest pleasure' and 'proudest privilege' of his life to 'work in comradeship' with the 'great-hearted' men who he was now in disagreement with.<sup>154</sup> He added, 'I do not anticipate that I shall ever experience a keener pang than I felt when I realised their judgement and conscience dictated a course which mine could not endorse'.<sup>155</sup> Immediately after the decisive vote on the acceptance of the Treaty had been taken on 7 January 1922, Michael Collins affirmed that he still had 'high regard' for the anti-Treaty men and would continue to do 'as much [as he could] for them, now as always'.<sup>156</sup> In particular, he noted that de Valera had 'exactly the same position' in his 'heart now as he always had'.<sup>157</sup> Public statements like these were made far less frequently as the prospect of Civil War loomed closer but, as the next section will illustrate, personal affections did continue to exist across the divide and could manifest in ambiguous encounters between former comrades who found themselves in opposing armies.

### The breakdown of brotherhood: the Civil War

After the Dáil voted to approve the Treaty with a majority of 64 to 57, there remained an 'extreme reluctance' to confront the realities of division amongst former comrades.<sup>158</sup> Seán T. O'Kelly wrote in retrospect that the main reason that the debates continued on as long as they did was that 'nobody was keen on seeing the final split actually realised' but

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<sup>153</sup> S.T. O'Kelly, Dáil Éireann Debate (15 December 1921).

<sup>154</sup> K. O'Higgins, Dáil Éireann Debate (19 December 1921).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> M. Collins, Dáil Éireann Debate (7 January 1922).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p.43.

even when it was, many clung onto their hopes of reconciliation.<sup>159</sup> Some maintained the line of peace longer than others. At the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis on 21 February 1922, President de Valera turned to the delegates in support of the Treaty and said, 'We are brothers here today. We hold different views, I hold mine most strongly, but no power of England is going to divide us'.<sup>160</sup> This did not, of course, hold true but many did continue to strive for a peaceful solution. Seán Moylan was amongst them and on 3 May 1922 he stated that: 'Every thinking Republican views with horror the possibility of strife between comrades. To myself, personally, the idea of fighting the men who fought with me is particularly abhorrent and I was willing to explore every avenue to peace'.<sup>161</sup> Local and national newspapers echoed Moylan's sentiments, and 3 days later the *Tuam Herald* reported that

All over this unfortunate country fratricidal strife is breaking out, brother is fighting against brother...Instead of being all as one man lifting up our voices to God in thanksgiving and striving with noble emulation with all our might and main to make our dear fatherland what it should be today, free, prosperous and happy, we are turning it into a hell. Surely the innate patriotism, the good sense, the instinctive brotherhood of Irishmen, the love of God and the love of our fellow man, the hope of our future, individually and as a people...should inspire us to live a different life as a people and to pursue a far different course.<sup>162</sup>

The notion that brotherhood was 'instinctive' to Irishmen, popular amongst nationalists of all strands, had indeed made the possibility of Civil War seem especially shocking and feel especially painful. Though it was not without exception, the general harmony of Volunteers between 1913 and 1921 was conceived as the rightful and natural state of

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<sup>159</sup> NLI MS 27,707, Typescript in English of Seán T. O Ceallaigh's memoirs [undated].

<sup>160</sup> NLI MS 8455/19, *Poblacht na hÉireann* vol.1. no.10 (February 28, 1922).

<sup>161</sup> S. Moylan, Dáil Éireann Debate (3 May 1922).

<sup>162</sup> *Tuam Herald* vol.82 no.5,109 (6 May 1922), p.2.

patriotic Irishmen whilst a war of brother against brother was a plague on the nation and its manhood. Some Volunteers reported in retrospect a sense of disbelief that the split could lead to Civil War, even as it became increasingly probable. Seán Prendergast counted himself among the group who 'did not think it would come to such a point when former comrades would be classed as enemies'.<sup>163</sup> Up until very late in the day, Liam Deasy could still not accept that war would break out: 'It seemed impossible that men who, only a few short months ago, were so closely united in the common cause, should over-night, become deadly enemies'.<sup>164</sup> The fact that so many were in denial and clung onto the depleting union is an indication of the depth of their attachments and how important their collective had been in the preceding years. The brotherhood of like-minded men had formed an essential part of these Volunteers' revolutionary identities, and that identity was now being undermined. There were some men who continued to try to bridge the divide throughout the war and beyond, and others that refused to take part in a conflict that pitted friends, family members and, fundamentally, Irishmen, against one another. Florence O'Donoghue was prominent amongst those who continued to seek a resolution, creating in late 1922 a group called the 'Neutral IRA' along with Seán O'Hegarty. It claimed a membership of 20,000 men who did not take part in the Civil War, but its efforts at reconciliation ultimately failed.<sup>165</sup>

As the Civil War began in earnest in the summer of 1922, many remained reluctant to confront the new reality. According to Dan Breen in his witness statement, the 'Republican columns' had 'no heart for the fight' and 'did not want this war of brother against brother'.<sup>166</sup> Such reluctance existed amongst those in support of the Free State

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<sup>163</sup> BMH WS 802, Seán Prendergast, p.11.

<sup>164</sup> Deasy, *Brother Against Brother*, p.45.

<sup>165</sup> C. Townshend, *The Republic* (London, 2013), p.445.

<sup>166</sup> BMH WS 1763, Dan Breen, p.50.

too, and the result was a certain level of amicability between each side in the early days of the conflict. In the words of Volunteer Moss Twomey, in spite of the developing antagonism, 'no very acute bitterness existed between those who had been comrades'.<sup>167</sup> Jim O'Donnell concurred that there was 'no real bitterness between the forces as one would expect – only a feeling of unbelief that such a thing would or could happen'.<sup>168</sup> It was written of Harry Boland in 1924 that 'even in the latest struggle there was no bitterness in [his] breast. Duty compelled him to strive and strike against those who had once been his comrades'.<sup>169</sup> This uncomfortable balance between a soldier's feeling of duty and his existing social loyalties became clear when former friends met in their new roles as military opponents. Various personal accounts from the period note times when those on the opposing side were kind to them or their comrades, or completed their duties but did so with courtesy and kept relations cordial. In the very early days of the conflict, when that reluctance was most pervasive, Liam Deasy was stopped by a Free State patrol headed by Liam Tobin, who he had often met during the War of Independence and who he still deemed 'a man of sterling character and undoubted courage'.<sup>170</sup> He noted that he had often reflected on this encounter 'with a friend whom the fortunes of war had placed in the most invidious position'.<sup>171</sup> Deasy praised the fact that Tobin was a good soldier who did his duty by escorting him to Wellington Barracks, although he was sure that 'his heart was not in it'.<sup>172</sup> The men's heart not being in it was perhaps the best summary of the ambivalence of the early days of the Civil War, which contrasted

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<sup>167</sup> NLI MS 44,126/4, Copy of question and answer session with Moss Twomey [undated].

<sup>168</sup> NLI MS 44,046/2, J. O'Donnell, *Recollection based on the Diary of an Irish Volunteer 1898 to 1924* (1972).

<sup>169</sup> UCDA P150/1173, Documents relating to the death of Harry Boland: 'Harry Boland: Some Random Reflections, by a Waterford Ex-internee', *The Waterford News* (9 May 1924).

<sup>170</sup> Deasy, *Brother Against Brother*, p.48.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*



markedly with the passions of early War of Independence engagements. When Deasy then arrived at the barracks, he was interviewed by Eoin O'Duffy, Assistant Chief-of-Staff of the Free State army. O'Duffy, like Tobin, maintained a certain amicability and said 'This war is too bad, Liam', before asking the necessary questions.<sup>173</sup> Tobin and O'Duffy were each maintaining their positions as Free State soldiers, but did so in a way that was still friendly and acknowledged that neither party wished to be in that situation. They navigated through the difficult social interaction by carefully balancing their competing personal and political allegiances.

There was, however, a danger that leniency with a former comrade could step beyond cordiality and inhibit the performance of the soldierly role. Liam Lynch recognised this and actively sought to avoid his prior affections getting in the way of the task at hand. In 1922, the IRA had surrounded Ashford Castle in County Mayo which was at that time held by the Free State forces under the command of Donncha O'Hannigan. Lynch, who was commanding the IRA, had been neighbours and 'very close friends' with O'Hannigan, and fought with him during the War of Independence.<sup>174</sup> Lynch was concerned that a man that he held in such regard would be forced to surrender, but also that if he was lenient it would be seen as 'an abuse of his authority in favour of a personal friend'.<sup>175</sup> To avoid the conflict of interests, he chose to give Liam Deasy full authority to take over the operation. In a more extreme example, Joe Good narrowly avoided being killed during an ambush by the anti-Treaty IRA when Dan Breen stopped a soldier from shooting him because he recognised Good as a man who had fought in the Easter Rising.<sup>176</sup> On each side of the split, many soldiers could not simply dismiss their past

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p.53.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> M. Good, 'Epilogue' in J. Good, *Enchanted by Dreams: The Journal of a Revolutionary* (Kerry, 1996), pp.188-189; It is notable that Joe Good himself did not include this story in his memoir. He was known for

loyalties to meet the new circumstances and these loyalties could in turn shape the military decisions they made. The Free State authorities feared the consequences of any amicable relations between the two armies. An October 1922 copy of the anti-Treaty newspaper *The Fenian* printed an intercepted order from General Eoin O'Duffy that read, 'It has been observed that certain members of the National Army are on rather friendly terms with members of the irregulars' and in some cases this led to 'desertion' and 'treachery'.<sup>177</sup> The fact that such a directive was deemed necessary indicates that 'friendly terms' across the split were rather common.

Some of the most complex Civil War relations existed between prison guard and prisoner, or captor and captive. When these purportedly enemy men saw each other and communicated so frequently, it was difficult to maintain the formal demarcations of their military positions. Ernie O'Malley, for instance, noted the jovial and familiar nature of his conversations with J.J. O'Connell when the latter was a captive of the anti-Treatyites in the Four Courts.<sup>178</sup> On the other side of the divide, when Liam Deasy was held prisoner at Arbour Hill Barracks in Dublin, he was guarded by three Free State officers who treated him kindly. He came to regard them 'more as friends than as captors', and their friendship lasted many years thereafter.<sup>179</sup> Peadar O'Donnell had a particularly unusual amicable relationship with one Free State prison guard: the man had tried to kill O'Donnell's brother in 1922, yet in 1923 was smuggling him books into prison.<sup>180</sup> In another notable case, the Governor of Mountjoy Jail in 1923 – who happened to be the brother of W.T.

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disliking heroics and glory-seeking, and this story was in fact told to his son, Maurice, by one of his former comrades; Ernie O'Malley also managed to avoid being killed due to the sympathies of a man on the opposing side. Dr Matt O'Connor had been the Senior Medical Officer in Mountjoy and oversaw O'Malley's recovery from a bad injury. In order to stop O'Malley facing execution, O'Connor told his Free State seniors that his patient's condition was more severe than it truly was. After the conflict had ended, the two remained close (English, *Ernie O'Malley*, p.175).

<sup>177</sup> NLI MS 8460/51, *The Fenian: War Issue* no.76 (7 October 1922).

<sup>178</sup> O'Malley, *The Singing Flame*, p.114.

<sup>179</sup> Deasy, *Brother Against Brother*, p.115.

<sup>180</sup> O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open*, p.169.

Cosgrave, then President of the Irish Free State – still held Ernie O'Malley in such high esteem that he repeatedly asked to help him in some way. O'Malley eventually agreed to let Governor Cosgrave smuggle out a letter for him.<sup>181</sup> When Seán T. O'Kelly, meanwhile, was arrested and taken to Kilmainham Jail in 1923, he was initially kept waiting for a long time and later found out that this was because both the Governor and the Deputy Governor of the prison had refused to receive him. Both were old friends of his. The Commandant who did eventually receive him, Commandant Eddie Morkan, was *also* an old friend of O'Kelly's but was obliged to carry out the orders of his seniors, 'much to his disgust'.<sup>182</sup> In the tumult of Civil War, these spaces where former comrades turned opponents were forced to interact with each other were ill-defined. Where there had been a clear demarcation between enemies in the War of Independence, in the new conflict between former allies encounters between opposing soldiers were often ambiguous.

The ambiguity of Civil War relations also became clear in instances where soldiers paid official tribute to men who died on the other side of the divide. In June 1922, for example, an anti-Treaty journal published a tribute 'of genuine sorrow' to the pro-Treaty TD Joe McGuinness: 'He was universally loved and respected, not only as one who fought a good fight for Ireland, but for his kindly and attractive temperament...All honour to his memory'.<sup>183</sup> Dan Breen, meanwhile, recounted in his witness statement that on the day of IRA Commandant Michael Sadler's funeral in 1922, the Free Staters in the local Garda Barracks flew the tricolour at half-mast.<sup>184</sup> This kind of formal recognition of shared

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, pp.200-1.

<sup>182</sup> NLI MS 27,707, Typescript in English of Seán T. O Ceallaigh's memoirs [undated].

<sup>183</sup> NLI MS 8455 /16, *Poblacht na hÉireann* vol.1, no.24, 8 June 1922.

<sup>184</sup> BMH WS 1763 Dan Breen, p.112; At the funeral, Sadler's father had poignantly remarked, 'My son is gone, but the only regret I have is that it is a sad day when Irishmen should turn their guns on each other. I hope this time will end soon' (Ibid, p.111).

mourning was a way to honour the brotherhood of the past and the personal affections and respect that could continue to exist despite the conflict. Indeed, as late as April 1923, just before the ceasefire was called, the *Poblacht na h-Éireann* journal produced by prisoners in Newbridge internment camp, stated that ‘it would be antagonistic to the spirit of 1916 and to that brotherhood to which it gave expression to indulge in reproaches or recriminations towards those who have left the Republican ranks or who have allied themselves with their enemies’.<sup>185</sup> The reference to an allegiance with ‘their enemies’ was, of course, a jibe, but the fact that they apparently wished to refrain from ‘recriminations’ in order not to taint the ‘spirit’ and ‘brotherhood’ of the past remains significant. Their brotherhood remained sacrosanct, even if the contemporary realities were far less agreeable.

As well as the wider sense of lost brotherhood, the loss of personal relationships to the divisive politics remained painful long after the Civil War had ended. Todd Andrews recalled in his 1979 memoir being ‘sick at heart’ that a close friendship with a pro-Treaty man came to ‘such a miserable end’.<sup>186</sup> He observed that ‘old friends and acquaintances began to pass one another in the street’, and gave the following example,

Our local newsagent, a neighbour from whom I had bought papers since I was a small boy, made some mildly disparaging remark about De Valera. I made some resentful reply, walked out of the shop and never went into it again for the rest of my life. I avoided anyone who favoured the treaty, however passively.<sup>187</sup>

The Treaty division was not limited to the military and political classes but cut across society, causing domestic as well as public divisions. Indeed, it is widely noted that

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<sup>185</sup> NLI MS 50,596/3, *Poblacht na h-Eireann in Droichead Nua* issued by the Irish Republican Army prisoners in Newbridge Camp (21 April 1923).

<sup>186</sup> Andrews, *Dublin Made Me*, p.217.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

several families were ‘torn apart’ by the Civil War.<sup>188</sup> Brothers Seán and Tom Hales are an infamous example: Seán was a Free State TD, killed by anti-Treaty gunmen; Tom was the IRA commanding officer who oversaw the ambush that killed Michael Collins. They were sure, however, to never criticise one another in public.<sup>189</sup> The Civil War is often characterised as a war of ‘brother against brother’ but as in any such conflict, it in fact produced a range of complex cleavages in what were often large Catholic families. John O’Reilly and his four sons had, for example, all been out in Easter week and for this, he was extremely proud.<sup>190</sup> When the winter of 1921 came around, John supported the Treaty, two of his sons stuck with the anti-Treaty IRA, and two played no part in the war.<sup>191</sup> Indeed, whilst social ties could certainly influence an individual’s perspective on the Treaty, there were also many close friends and family members who stuck with their convictions and found themselves in opposition to their loved ones. The ways that Volunteers negotiated their private lives around these political and military divisions were varied, but the lasting influence of the Treaty split is plain to see in subsequent twentieth century Irish political, social and cultural history and beyond. During the Civil War period itself, the divisions stoked amongst Volunteers by the Treaty went far beyond politics and militarism, producing social dynamics amongst Irishmen that could be intense, hostile, strange, cordial or ambivalent.

### Reconciliation?

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, many former Volunteers continued to confine their social circles to those who they sided with on the matter of the Treaty. Todd

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<sup>188</sup> Deasy, *Brother Against Brother*, p.94.

<sup>189</sup> Hart, *IRA & Enemies*, p.198.

<sup>190</sup> NLI MS 44,038/3, Seán Cronin article about a meeting with Sam O’Reilly [undated].

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

Andrews detailed his post-revolution life as part of a social group who had been friends since they were boys and who had all opposed the settlement. They remained committed to their ideals, and tended not to associate with anyone in support of the Free State: Andrews noted that it took him some time to realise that anyone who had not taken the republican side in the Civil War was not personally hostile to him.<sup>192</sup> He described the group as ‘dyed-in-the-wool Republicans’ with strong puritanical beliefs whose only interests were ‘politics in its broadest sense’:

We talked about the incidents in which we had been involved during the Black and Tan War and during the Civil War; of ambushes, of escapes, of hunger strikes, of the internment camps and jails; of the personalities that had come our way over these years and of losses that had affected us intimately.<sup>193</sup>

Andrews notes in particular that the deaths of men that the group knew in the Civil War were ‘impossible’ to forget.<sup>194</sup> Their revolutionary experiences remained central to their sense of themselves and of their collective, and their post-Treaty comradeship continued to define their lives.

The ruptures in the republican community, as they occurred across families, personal friendships and social groups, were not, however, irreconcilable. As years passed many former comrades reunited and many relationships were remade. In their later years, former Volunteers often chose to focus on the good of the revolutionary period and on the joyous collective feeling that marked the pre-Treaty era.<sup>195</sup> Indeed, after a few years of only keeping the company of fellow republicans, Todd Andrews changed his ways and

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<sup>192</sup> Andrews, *Man of No Property*, p.18.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, p.29.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Official commemoration also began to focus on ‘reconciling hostile factions through identification of some episode of common inspiration or shared suffering in the past’ (D. Fitzpatrick, ‘Commemoration in the Irish Free State: a chronicle of embarrassment’ in I. McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), p.186).

‘made it a rule’ to make himself available to any old IRA member who wished to see him, whatever side of the Civil War they had fought on.<sup>196</sup> On the other side of the divide, Free State Army veteran Joe Good was regularly visited by a number of old War of Independence comrades who had fought in the anti-Treaty IRA.<sup>197</sup> These relations of later decades that centred on the unity of the War of Independence were partly facilitated by the veterans’ organisation, ‘The National Association of Old IRA’ or ‘The Old IRA Members’ Association’. Founded on 23 January 1923 before the Civil War had come to an end, the organisation was formed with the aim ‘to end the present armed conflict between brother Irishmen’ which was an ‘immediate and most urgent necessity, if Ireland [was] to be saved from national suicide’.<sup>198</sup> The intention was to set Treaty differences aside – ‘when your house is on fire, the first duty is to put out the flames, not to waste time asking who started it’ – and members were free to hold ‘any views on the present political situation’, so long as they were ‘prepared to work to bring about peace between former comrades’.<sup>199</sup> The group stood strong well into the century, organising social and commemorative events for ex-IRA men across the country. An April 1937 edition of the *Nenagh Guardian* reported that the recent ‘National Convention of the National Association of the Old IRA’ was, according to its Chairman, ‘successful in renewing old friendships broken in 1922, which was a good omen for the future of the country’.<sup>200</sup> Not everyone, however, was open to reconciliation.

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p.314.

<sup>197</sup> M. Good, ‘Epilogue’ in J. Good, *Enchanted by Dreams: The Journal of a Revolutionary* (Kerry, 1996), p.190.

<sup>198</sup> NLI EPH C119, The Old IRA Members’ Association Handbill (23 January 1923).

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> *The Nenagh Guardian* Vol.99 No. 16 (17 April 1937), p.4.

The Military Service Pensions Collection provides a valuable insight into the varied trajectories of post-revolutionary relationships.<sup>201</sup> Those who applied to be recompensed for their service in the years 1916 to 1923 had to acquire references from contemporaries who could support their testimony. In some cases, these supporting statements were made across the Treaty divide. For example, Thomas Cardiff who fought in the anti-Treaty IRA wrote an affidavit for Paddy Brennan who served in the National Army during the Civil War, stating that Brennan was ‘a splendid volunteer and a courageous officer and was held in high esteem by his service officers and by those who served under him’ and had ‘a record of service that any soldier may well be proud of.’<sup>202</sup> Others were not, however, so keen to set Civil War animosities aside. As Marie Coleman has found, there is ‘no doubt’ that some men refused to give supporting statements for those they had fought with in the War of Independence but had taken the opposing side in the Civil War.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, TD Michael Donnellan claimed in 1953 that ‘the reason for the rejection of certain claims stems from the civil war...I fear that some verifying officer did not forget the ravages and the troubles that occurred’.<sup>204</sup> There was, therefore, significant variation in how men conceived of their revolutionary brotherhood in the decades that followed: whilst some were happy to reconcile and set political differences aside, others could maintain a deep-seated hostility to the other side throughout their lives, to the extent that they obstructed former comrades receiving their due financial support in old age.

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<sup>201</sup> Available at: <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923/search-the-collection/pensions-series>.

<sup>202</sup> UCDA P113/13, Handwritten affidavit by Thomas Cardiff concerning the service history of Paddy Brennan [undated].

<sup>203</sup> M. Coleman, ‘Military Service Pensions for Veterans of the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923’, *War in History* 20 (2013), p.221.

<sup>204</sup> M. Coleman, ‘Military service pensions and the recognition and reintegration of guerrilla fighters after the Irish revolution’, *Historical Research* 91 (2018), p.571.



## Conclusion

On 24 May 1923, the Chief of the Staff of the anti-Treaty IRA, Frank Aiken, ordered his men to dump their arms and formally brought the Irish Civil War to a close.<sup>205</sup> Five months later, however, a number of republican men remained in Free State jails for the part they had played in the conflict.<sup>206</sup> Among them was Liam Deasy who, when captured by the Free State National Army in January of the same year, had called on his comrades to surrender themselves and their arms. For this, he was denounced by many of his republican comrades. In Mountjoy Jail on 17 October 1923, Deasy, perhaps reflecting on this fact, wrote:

In the years to come, memory will hold precious, not the brief moment of triumph, but the love and sympathy of comrades, and will seek to recall not the plaudits of success but 'the touch of a vanished hand, or the sound of a voice that is still'.<sup>207</sup>

For Deasy, the details of politics and war, and of winning or losing, were not what mattered in the end. In future years, he imagined, what he and others would take from this tumultuous period was the relationships they formed and the experiences they shared. Deasy's prediction was, to some extent, borne out: whilst the rights and wrongs of the Treaty do feature in many retrospective accounts, the bonds between Volunteers appear far more prominently. Whether they had opposed or supported the Treaty, brotherhood and camaraderie were at the forefront of their revolutionary memories.

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<sup>205</sup> It had been clear that the Free State would win the war from very early in 1923 but an official IRA ceasefire was not called until 30 April.

<sup>206</sup> The Free State authorities released imprisoned republicans in stages, fearing that a mass exodus would risk reopening hostilities (See Hopkinson, *Green Against Green*, p.131).

<sup>207</sup> NLI MS 49,368, Republican autograph album compiled in Mountjoy Prison by Patrick O'Connor (1923); the final line in quotes is from Lord Tennyson's 1842 poem 'break, break, break'.

This chapter has considered the trajectory of notions of brotherhood across the revolutionary period, and men's experiences of that brotherhood, both in terms of feelings of collective unity and of individual bonds. For many, friendship and comradeship were an integral and cherished part of the revolutionary experience, but the period was also marked by a pressure to conform to ideals of unified brotherhood. The key sites of a soldier's revolutionary life were largely, if not exclusively, homosocial and it was in the confined environment of the all-male prison that these pressures became particularly acute. Volunteers existed in men's worlds where tough, restrained manliness was valued but which were also marked by immense love and affection between comrades. Before the Treaty, the men fighting together for their future were imagined as a solid everlasting unit so when that unit broke in two, the effect was calamitous. Still, they could never forget the immense feeling of unity that prevailed in the years leading up to the Treaty. Seán O'Faolain wrote pointedly in his memoir of this pervasive sense of support and togetherness:

In that moment I am sure every one of us ceased to be single or individual and became part of one another, in union...It was a supreme experience...when in our generous youth we lived and were ready to die for one of the most wild, beautiful and inexhaustible faiths possible to man - faith in one's fellows.<sup>208</sup>

Whilst his words indicate the genuine joys that came with feelings of brotherhood, they are nonetheless shaped by the pervasive ideals of republicanism and its romantic fraternal vision. Volunteer's experiences and their understanding of those experiences, at the time and in retrospect, were shaped by the discourses and exhortations of manly brotherhood that they heard, saw and read around them and which coloured their perception of what it meant to be a republican man amongst other republican men.

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<sup>208</sup> S. O'Faolain, *Vive Moi!* (London, 1964), p.172-3.

## Conclusion

Whilst imprisoned at Mountjoy Jail in November 1922, the IRA's Liam Mellows wrote an essay entitled 'The Human Factor'. In it, he claimed that

most military systems endeavour, unostensibly [sic], to reduce the individual human factors to a common measure by a rigid code of discipline under which the individual tends to lose his individuality and become an automation. But the human factor still remains human: the man still retains his will and judgement, his opinion and feelings and susceptibilities, even though he loyally subdues them to the requirements of military discipline.<sup>1</sup>

Mellows was writing to argue that 'outward compliance' from a soldier would not 'satisfy the requirements of real military discipline' which demanded the 'employment of the whole being – the entire man with all his faculties, moral and mental as well as physical – towards accomplishing the end required by his commander'.<sup>2</sup> His intention was to guide military strategy, but his words are indicative of the wider distinction between a Volunteer's 'outward' performance and his interior subjectivity. That distinction lies at the heart of this thesis, which has revealed the processes and contradictions underlying the enactment of military masculinity in the revolutionary IRA. It has shown the 'opinions and feelings and susceptibilities' that lay beneath the popular image of republican manly heroism.

### I

The ideal of masculinity peddled across republican discourses in the early twentieth century was ultimately an unattainable one.<sup>3</sup> The rhetoricians of advanced nationalism

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<sup>1</sup> NLI MS 20,849, Liam Mellows's 'Book of Cells' journal (Mountjoy Jail, 1922), pp.52-3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> R.W.Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender and*

had constructed a vision of perfect manhood that mimicked the heroes of mythic adventure, and real young men facing the tumult of war and revolution could not consistently and wholly live up to that model. They did their best to perform the role of ‘true Irishman’ through their appearances, actions and recollections, but there were always cracks in the veneer and moments when the performative nature of their acts and the messy human reality underlying them became discernible. Volunteers were certainly bound by a domineering culture of military masculinity and whilst the influence of that culture is clear to see in their contemporary and retrospective personal documents, it could not entirely govern their identities and actions. This thesis has identified patterns in how performances of selfhood amongst the IRA were mediated by the masculine ideal, but it has also taken account of the individuality and heterogeneity of recruits. All ‘cultural codes’ are ‘assimilated’ by individuals through a ‘selective process’, and the discursive codes of masculinity could be ‘actively used, adapted, reinforced or modified by groups and individuals, in different ways and in different situations, according to their shifting needs and desires in everyday life or in political struggles’.<sup>4</sup> IRA members undoubtedly faced a significant degree of pressure to conform to the masculine ideal in their contemporary actions and retrospective writings, but they could exercise agency in how and to what extent they did so.

Moreover, whilst the values and standards of martial manliness found in publications like *An tÓglách* were transparent and widely shared, they were also malleable. The guiding principles of sacrifice, courage, respectability and camaraderie remained consistent across the revolutionary period but ebbed and flowed to meet the

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*Society* 19.6 (2005) p.832; R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the person and sexual politics* (Cambridge, 1987), p.184.

<sup>4</sup> A. Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the making of the military: Conscription, military service and masculinity in Finland, 1917-39* (Farnham, 2014) p.26; M. Roper, ‘Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History’, *History Workshop Journal* 59 (2005), p.67.

realities of particular moments. For instance, courage was always integral to republican discourses of manliness, but its display became essential during periods of active conflict. Bravery was the cornerstone of performances of masculinity at the height of the War of Independence in 1920, but once the Truce was called in the summer of 1921, IRA leaders were more concerned with ensuring recruits demonstrated respectability, self-discipline and moral decency.<sup>5</sup> The basic tenets of the manly ideal remained the same nonetheless, and were not exclusive to the years of revolution nor to the IRA. As Aidan Beatty's work has shown, conceptions of Irish nationalist masculinity were relatively consistent across the period 1884 to 1938.<sup>6</sup> The revolutionaries tapped into a pre-existing formulation of manhood, which then maintained its influence in the years that followed. Whilst this thesis has recognised the *longue durée* of Irish nationalist masculinity, its concern has been with how the masculine ideal manifested itself in IRA member's experiences and recollections of the specific revolutionary moment.

## II

This thesis has revealed how IRA members' performances of selfhood, constituted in their contemporary and retrospective actions and words, were mediated by the expectations and constraints of a conception of military masculinity that pervaded republican discourses. In doing so, it has contributed to our understanding of gender in the revolution as well as to our understanding of Volunteer selfhood and experience. The term 'revolution' refers to a series of transformative events committed by a group of politically motivated actors, but the subjectivities of those actors beyond their political thought has often been overlooked. Indeed, in the Irish case, the political and military

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<sup>5</sup> A comparison of articles found in *An tÓglách* at each moment attests to the varying priorities across the revolution.

<sup>6</sup> A. Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1928* (London, 2016).

details have been widely studied, but the identities, mentalities and experiences of the individuals who fought, suffered and died for the cause have been insufficiently explored. Despite the wealth of scholarship on the revolution, we still do not know enough about the ordinary men who enacted it and the forces that shaped their experiences and identities. The focus of this research may have been on masculinity, but it has contributed to the wider project of understanding what it meant and how it felt to be a member of the IRA.

The thesis has, therefore, built on the foundations laid by historians of Irish gender as well as by historians who have considered elements of the revolutionary experience. Each chapter has contributed to our understanding of the gender dimensions of Irish nationalism and militarism at the level of popular discourse, but most importantly with regards to the lived experiences of real men. By interrogating underexplored themes such as masculinity and emotion, the thesis has both diversified the historiography of the Irish revolution and the IRA and engaged with the historiographical concerns of more traditional political and military histories. It has, for instance, reappraised the dynamics of the Treaty divide by highlighting the impact of notions of loyal brotherhood and feelings of masculine pride upon men's acceptance or rejection of its terms. Moreover, it has added to our understanding of the motivations that drove revolutionary pursuits by revealing the pressure upon Volunteers to perform courageous and sacrificial feats in order to maintain their masculine status.

To explore relationships, emotions and gendered performance in the context of revolution is not necessarily to radically depart from political and military historiography, and may in fact help historians to better understand what happened during those turbulent years and why. Such themes are not an addendum, but rather are essential if we are to develop a rounded picture of the Irish revolution and its

participants. The consistent preoccupation in the historiography of the Irish revolution with 'what actually happened' and a highly empirical methodology has traditionally obscured more novel approaches, but they have begun to be recognised for their value. A greater comprehension of gendered identity and experience may not change our understanding of what exactly happened, to take a classic example, during the Kilmichael ambush but it can help us to understand the men that took part, their sense of self and the factors that shaped how they behaved, appeared and felt that day which is no less important. By recognising Volunteers as masculine subjects, we can build a clearer picture of their identities, motivations and experiences. This thesis has thus advanced our understanding of the IRA by recognising the gender dimensions of the organisation and by highlighting aspects of the everyday revolutionary experience that have traditionally been disregarded. It has given a voice to those that fought and died for the republican cause whilst recognising the gendered ideals that moulded and constrained those voices. The historiography of the Irish revolution will benefit from researching these different themes, asking these different questions, and acknowledging their utility in developing our understanding of those turbulent years.

In its consideration of the ways in which a group of nationalist young men navigated a masculine military ideal in a period of anti-colonial resistance, the thesis has also engaged with wider historiographical questions beyond the Irish case. Studies of masculinities in history, including nationalist masculinities, have tended to be concerned predominantly with gendered representations and stereotypes at the expense of men's lived identities and experiences. This thesis has departed from that tradition by studying real men and the impact of manly ideals upon their lives. It has therefore variegated the field of historical masculinities using an Irish case study. Ireland has not traditionally been a part of conversations about European nationalism and gender, whilst countries

like Britain and France have featured heavily.<sup>7</sup> There is still a great deal more work to be done, but this thesis has contributed to bringing the gendered dimensions of Irish nationalism to the fore. As well as exploring the interaction of nationalism and masculinity, it has engaged with a range of wider themes. It has, for example, shown how a colonial experience can produce a mediated masculine ideal that values respectability as much as virility, how gendered identities are consciously and unconsciously performed for different audiences, how pressures to perform united brotherhood can manifest in military organisations and how, even in strict emotional regimes, typically censured emotional expressions can become permissible in particular contexts. Ultimately, it has shown how popular gendered discourses can shape the subjectivities of individual actors.

### III

The revolutionary period's specific culture of masculinity conditioned the Irish Free State that succeeded it. Women in the new polity were systematically discriminated against and 'explicitly barred from claiming themselves a public identity' through discriminatory laws which, for example, excluded all women from jury service and married women from teaching.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, nationalist women were often regarded by nationalist men 'only in domestic terms', as wives and mothers who supported the endeavours of their husbands and sons but not as independent political activists.<sup>9</sup> Kevin Kenny has noted that 'critics have traced some of the repressive sexual atmosphere and gender inequalities of the Free State to the masculinist heroics and myopia of early twentieth-century Irish

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the edited collections I. Blom, K. Hagemann and C. Hall (eds.), *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000), T. Mayer (ed.) *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (London, 2000) and S. Dudink, K. Hagemann and J. Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> M. G. Valiulis, 'Power, gender and identity in the Irish Free State', *Journal of Women's History* (1995), p.120.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.



nationalism'.<sup>10</sup> Gender roles had become more fluid during the revolution as nationalist women took on a variety of positions and tasks that would traditionally have been reserved for men but there remained an 'underlying sexism in advanced nationalist thinking' during and after the revolution.<sup>11</sup> That sexism was compounded by republicanism's 'male-centric notion of Irish citizenship' and veneration of 'warrior qualities' and 'martial values', each of which were coded as masculine.<sup>12</sup> More research is needed on the ramifications of the revolutionary masculine ideal on Irish women's lives in the early twentieth century but since masculinity and femininity are broadly defined in opposition to each other, it appears that a glorification of the masculine led to a belittling of the feminine.

Discourses of martial manliness continued to proliferate in the Irish Free State and were essential to the accepted national narrative – in particular, the pro-Treaty government continued to evoke the rhetoric and imagery of sacrificial manliness and the revolutionary dead – but the corporeal figure of the rebel gunman was to have no visible place or power in society. In other words, the language and symbolism of manly heroism remained useful but the manly guerrilla fighter lost public credibility after the trauma of the Civil War and in the changed atmosphere of new Irish statehood. The official soldiers of the Free State army and the politicians of the Dáil embodied a more 'sensible' form of masculinity that was counterpoised against the 'high emotion' of violent, revolutionary

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<sup>10</sup> K. Kenny, 'Ireland and the British Empire: An Introduction' in K. Kenny (ed), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2004), p.23; Kenny does not provide references to the work of such critics.

<sup>11</sup> M.G. Valiulis, 'The Politics of Gender in the Irish Free State, 1922-1937', *Women's History Review* (2011), p.570; The Easter Rising's proclamation of independence had committed to gender equality, but those who took up the republican mantle after 1916 were less progressive than the proclamation's signatories had been.

<sup>12</sup> D. Montgomery, "'They were the men who licked the IRA until they squealed": Blueshirt Masculine Identity 1932-36' in C. Magennis and R. Mullen (eds.), *Irish Masculinities: Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Dublin, 2011), p.122.

masculinity.<sup>13</sup> The trajectory and resonance of revolutionary martial manliness and its contingent ideals in the Free State, and thereafter in mid-century Ireland under the sway of Éamon de Valera's religious and social conservatism, requires more scholarly attention and would be an illuminating avenue for further study.

A period of Irish history that has more readily been explored through the lens of masculinity is the Northern Irish Troubles that began in the late 1960s.<sup>14</sup> It is, unsurprisingly, in that resurgence of the republican struggle that the martial manly ideal of the Irish revolution has its most conspicuous legacy. The Provisional IRA explicitly evoked the memory of the revolutionary IRA, its key figures and its sacrificial masculine values.<sup>15</sup> Whilst those values had continued to predominate amongst republicans throughout the century, they had their clearest revival in the actions of the Provisional IRA. The H-Block hunger strikes in particular were reminiscent of the revolution, following Patrick Pearse's logic of blood sacrifice and evoking the martyrdom of Terence MacSwiney.<sup>16</sup> The legacy of the revolutionary IRA's conception of military masculinity amongst wider Irish society in recent history is less clear. What place does the figure of the 1910s and 20s Irish revolutionary have in contemporary conceptions of Irish masculinity? An anecdotal answer comes from an unlikely source: in a 2019 episode of

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<sup>13</sup> F. Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford, 2015), p.11.

<sup>14</sup> This work has often come from literary and sociological perspectives, and a thorough history of masculinity in the Provisional IRA remains to be written. Magennis and Mullen's edited collection *Irish Masculinities: Reflections on Literature and Culture*, Magennis's *Sons of Ulster: Masculinities in the Contemporary Northern Irish Novel* (Oxford, 2010) and Conn Holohan and Tony Tracy's edited collection *Masculinity and Irish Popular Culture: Tiger's Tales* (London, 2014) each engage in some way with the Troubles, their representation and their legacy. From a sociological perspective, see F. Ashe, 'Gendering War and Peace: Militarised Masculinities in Northern Ireland', *Men and Masculinities* 15.3 (2012) pp.230-248; F. Ashe and K. Harland, 'Troubling Masculinities: Changing Patterns of Violent Masculinities in a Society Emerging from Political Conflict', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37.9 (2014), pp.747-662; A. Bairner, 'Masculinity, Violence and the Irish Peace Process', *Capital and Class* 69 (1999), pp.125-144.

<sup>15</sup> R. English, *Armed Struggle: the history of the IRA* (London, 2003), pp.340-1.

<sup>16</sup> G. Sweeney, 'Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice', *Journal of Contemporary History* 28.3 (1993), pp.421-437; R. O'Rawe, *Blanketmen: An Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike* (Dublin, 2005), p.71.

his highly popular podcast, Blindboy (of the Irish comedy music duo the Rubberbandits) stated that as a teenager growing up in 1990s Limerick ‘the IRA, [Éamon] de Valera [and] Michael Collins’ were ‘signifiers of...Irish manliness and being tough and being hard’.<sup>17</sup> It is indeed not difficult to find evidence of the enduring legacy of prominent figures of Irish nationalism, and the form of masculinity they were considered to embody, in Irish culture and society beyond militant republican circles. Films like *Michael Collins* and *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* have, for example, helped to reproduce romanticised images of IRA masculinity for younger generations.<sup>18</sup> What is harder to ascertain is the influence such images have had on their audiences. The vision of masculinity promulgated and enacted during the Irish revolution certainly did not go away when Volunteers dumped their arms in 1923, but the extent to and manner in which it cast a shadow over twentieth and twenty-first century Ireland ought to be examined further.

#### IV

This thesis has advanced the history of the IRA and problematised the predominant narrative of heroic republican masculinity. Through its examination of manly ideals and masculine identities amongst Volunteers, it has revealed the pressures and processes that lay beneath popular depictions of the young republicans as a united band of fearless, righteous heroes. It has shown that it was not, as *The Irish Volunteer* proclaimed in 1914, ‘the easiest thing in the world to make the average Irishman into a soldier’.<sup>19</sup> Rather, performing the soldierly role demanded a great deal of effort. It required men to consider their willingness to sacrifice their lives, their capacity for mental and physical endurance, their fear, their grief, their friendships, their sense of

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<sup>17</sup> Blindboy, *The Blindboy Podcast* [podcast] (9 July 2019).

<sup>18</sup> E. Morgan, ‘Ireland’s Lost Action Hero: *Michael Collins*, a Secret History of Irish Masculinity’, *New Hibernia Review* 2.1 (1998), pp.26-42; D. Ging, *Men and Masculinities in Irish Cinema* (Dublin, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> *The Irish Volunteer* vol.I. no.2 (14 February 1914), p.6.

belonging, their morality and their commitment to the cause. It compelled them to tailor their actions, their clothing, their comportment, and their spoken and written words in order to ensure they were seen by outsiders and by fellow Volunteers as undoubtedly masculine. These performances of masculinity continued in subsequent years, as the men recorded and shared accounts which affirmed their personal, and the IRA's collective, manly character. In doing so, they reproduced a popular understanding of the organisation and the identities of its members which has not been sufficiently interrogated. Whilst the thoroughly masculine nature of Irish republican discourses and ideals have begun to be uncovered, this thesis constitutes the first serious attempt to understand what those discourses and ideals meant for the men most firmly under their influence. Specifically, it has explored how the pressures upon soldiers to play the manly part shaped their public appearances and actions, their expressions of emotion and their relationships with other men. It has ultimately shown that the Volunteer experience, and the way that experience was presented at the time and in retrospect, was heavily mediated by the constraints of a consistent and pervasive ideal of republican martial manliness.

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