Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Narianna B. Kretschmer April 13, 2015

“The Female Dregs of Dublin”: Political Repression, Socioeconomic Deprivation and the Separation Women of Easter 1916

by

Narianna Kretschmer

Dr. Walter Adamson
Adviser

History

Dr. Kathryn Amdur
Committee Member

Dr. Geraldine Higgins
Committee Member

2015

“The Female Dregs of Dublin”: Political Repression, Socioeconomic Deprivation and the Separation Women of Easter 1916

By

Narianna Kretschmer

Dr. Walter Adamson
Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

History

2015

Abstract
"The Female Dregs of Dublin":
Political Repression, Socioeconomic Deprivation and
the Separation Women of Easter 1916

By Narianna Kretschmer

On the morning of April 24, 1916, fifteen hundred dedicated Irish nationalists began a militarized campaign to overtake Dublin from the British colonial agents who controlled the city. The rebellion, which came to be known as the Easter Rising, was a complete failure—after just five days, rebel leaders surrendered to British troops, and Dublin remained subordinate to English authority. Yet, in the hundred years since the events of 1916, the Rising has been widely remembered as a fundamental moment in the quest for Irish self-determination, and in the history of Ireland as a whole.

Despite the Rebellion's prominence in Irish memory, very few Dubliners actively partook in the events of April 1916. Less than two percent of the city's residents participated in the violent clashes that transpired throughout the week. Civilians were simultaneously threatened by wayward gunfire and deprived of essential resources. Many Dubliners expressed negative reactions to the Easter Rising. This thesis investigates the responses of one particular group—the Separation Women, who received that label because they were dependent on the allowances their husbands earned for serving with the British Army in World War I.

The Separation Women are nearly always present in accounts of the Rebellion, either because of the looting of abandoned storefronts in which they participated, or, more frequently, because of the insults, and in some cases bricks and bottles, they hurled at the surrendered nationalists. Historians of the Rising have usually treated contemporary accounts of these women, which couch them either as callously greedy or emotionally unstable, as fully elucidatory. This thesis argues that those explanations deny the unique context of life as a mother in Dublin's notoriously perilous tenements. Separation wives had little access to political expression, even within women's organizations, and, as slum residents, they struggled daily to provide basic resources to their large families, for whom they were often the only providers. Ultimately, The decision to participate in looting or attacks on retreating rebels was informed by Separation Women's experiences of political repression and socioeconomic deprivation as members of Dublin's most disadvantaged communities.

“The Female Dregs of Dublin”: Political Repression, Socioeconomic Deprivation and the Separation Women of Easter 1916

By

Narianna Kretschmer

Dr. Walter Adamson
Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

History

2015

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to my thesis adviser, Dr. Walter Adamson, as well as the other members of my committee, Dr. Kathryn Amdur and Dr. Geraldine Higgins, for their interest in my research, their encouragement throughout the writing process, and their indispensable help with editing and revision.

I would also like to thank my family. Thanks to Lesa Kretschmer, for always being on my side, even when I am almost certainly wrong, and to Annika Kretschmer, for twenty years as the best cheerleader any sister could ever ask for. Thanks also to Steven Wright, for his unwavering support and love over the past two years, and for making my life, and me, better. Finally, thanks to John Kretschmer, for always being game to discuss the plight of the Separation Women, no matter where in the world he was. Without you, dad, I could not have written this thesis.

Table of Contents

Introduction

> "The breadth of death which had swept over poor Dublin carried with it the seeds of a new life, which, falling in different parts of Ireland, began to appear as green blades of new thought and new activity. The bonfires of Sinn Fein began to blaze on every Irish hillside, and thousands of the Irish people danced around the blaze of Sinn Fein, as if they warmed themselves at the fire of life. Parliamentarianism was a sinking fire, and, now, not all the united breath of a united party could ever again succeed in blowing it into an inspiring flame." [1] -Sean O'Casey, 1919

On the morning of Monday, April 24, 1916, approximately fifteen hundred members of Ireland's advanced nationalist groups began a militarized campaign to overtake Dublin from the British colonial agents who controlled both the city and the country as a whole. The rebellion, which came to be known as the Easter Rising, was a resounding failure—after just five days, the rebel leaders surrendered to British troops, and shortly thereafter fourteen men responsible for organizing the event were executed for their roles. Yet, despite the Rising's inability to achieve any of its stated goals, it has long been considered a fundamental turning point in the history of Ireland. Just three years after the events of the Rising Sean O'Casey, a noted playwright who was closely connected with the leadership of the advanced nationalists, was already beginning to discuss the crucial role the Rebellion played in Irish history. O'Casey wrote that, after the events of that week, parliamentarians who sought to resolve Ireland's problems with England via diplomacy would never again receive the full support of the Irish people. According to O'Casey's interpretation, the Rising was crucial because it brought increased visibility to nationalist movements, and thus stoked 'the bonfires' of support for Irish nationhood throughout the country.

[1] Sean O'Casey, The Story of the Irish Citizen Army (Dublin: Maunsel & Co., 1919), 63.

In 1966, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, commemorative celebrations were staged throughout the country, encouraging the people "to become drunk on remembrance".[2] On the seventy-fifth anniversary in 1991, the *Irish Independent* newspaper conducted a survey to gauge its readership's position on the importance of the Rising. Some commentators suspected that the nationalists who participated in the Rising might have fallen out of favor as a result of their perceived similarities to the Irish Republican Army members responsible for so much violence in the country. The newspaper found that in fact, 65 percent of respondents claimed to "look on the Rising with pride," while only 14 percent said they regretted it.[3] As the hundredth anniversary approaches, commemorative projects are already underway in Dublin, and several historical works that take memory of the Rising as their subjects have been published. Though the Rebellion has been more or less emphasized based on the political circumstances of a given moment, during the hundred years since the Rising it has always been regarded as an essential moment in the quest for Irish self-determination.

Despite its retroactively assigned significance, comparatively few Dubliners who lived through the events of the 1916 Rising recognized the importance of what they were witnessing. Experiences of the Easter Rising in Dublin can be categorized based on willingness of participation. The first group consists of the advanced nationalists who planned, funded, and ultimately executed the events of Easter week. Several distinct groups worked together to bring the idea of a nationalist Rising to reality. The oldest of these groups was the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), which was established in the 1850s with the goal of attaining independence for Ireland. In 1912, after the Ulster Volunteers were established in Northern Ireland for the purpose of preventing the implementation of home rule, the IRB helped initiate the Irish

[2] Declan Kiberd, "The Elephant of Revolutionary Forgetfulness," in *Revising the Rising*, ed. Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha and Theo Dorgan (Derry: Field Day, 1991) 5.
[3] Ibid, 3.

Volunteers in 1913. The Volunteers were a militarized organization that aimed to ensure that the third home rule bill would become law, thereby granting Ireland sovereignty over internal affairs. At the beginning of the First World War, the Volunteers split in two over the issue of British Army enlistment. Most of the small number who remained with the Irish Volunteers were also members of the IRB, and were strongly resistant to England's attempts to force Irishmen to fight British battles. A third nationalist group that was influential in the Rising was the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), which was formed by members of the Irish Transport Workers Union under James Larkin in 1913. In Dublin, corporations and business owners were typically either British or Irish unionists, who were opposed both to the unionization of Dublin workers and to the nationalist movements. As a result, Irish nationalism of the early twentieth century, unlike in other periods, was associated with labor advocates, as well as with other socially liberal groups, such as feminists. The ICA, for example, proclaimed the equality of the sexes within its ranks. In April of 1914, a separate women's branch of the Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, was established. The leadership of Cumann na mBan was subordinate to the Volunteer's executive, and women who joined the organization could expect to assist nationalism through only auxiliary efforts, rather than direct participation. Participation in women's groups was limited almost exclusively to members of the middle and upper classes, who had the time and financial resources required. The relationship between class and nationalism in Ireland was complex—but one faction that was almost never able to participate was that of poor Dublin women.

The second group was composed primarily of British soldiers stationed in Ireland. Some of these troops were already stationed in Dublin, and more were brought in from across the country after the violence began. Although soldiers and military officials were the only members of this group who actively participated in the violence of the Rising, unionists of all stripes fall

within its bounds. British government officials and their families and well as union-sympathizing Irish men and women can be understood as non-active members of this second category. Women's groups existed within unionist movements as well, although they were primarily concerned with supporting the British war effort. The members of these groups, like the women who joined Cumann na mBan, were largely educated middle- to upper-class Dubliners who were able to contribute financial backing and large amounts of time to their cause. On the whole, excluding the British soldiers who cannot be counted as members of Irish society, unionists were more financially secure than were their nationalist peers. They often had intimate connections with Britain that helped foster wealth and prestige within their Dublin communities.

It is the experience of the third group in which this thesis is most interested. At the start of the war, Dublin had a population of approximately 300,000.[4] When all of the active participants in the Easter Rising are combined, they totaled just over thirty-five hundred. This means that, even after population is adjusted for enlistment, only a miniscule fraction of those living in Dublin in 1916 played active roles in the events of the Rising. The vast majority of Dubliners were observers, and part of the aim of this paper is to explore their experiences during the Rising. Negative reactions to the Rebellion were widespread, but the responses of one particular group, who were labeled 'separation women' by their contemporaries, are the primary focus of this thesis. Separation women were described in one account of the Rising as "the worst dressed, indeed the female dregs of Dublin life."[5] These women were most often residents of Dublin's poorest tenement communities who had husbands, fathers, or sons fighting with the British forces on the continent in World War I. Dependents of British soldiers received 'separation allowances' to replace the wages their male family members would have earned

[4] Joseph O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin: A City in Distress, 1899-1916* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 284.
[5] James Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 48.

working at home. During the Rising, these women engaged in acts of verbal and physical violence against the rebels. Irish nationalist participants recalled how, after the Rebellion was defeated, separation wives waited outside of the jails were the surrendered rebels were held, in order to hurl insults at the men who had wreaked havoc on their city. In the same contemporary account of the Rising, James Stephens recalls looking on as "the Volunteers were assailed by these women with bricks, bottles, sticks".[6] Separation women also engaged in looting during the Rising. The violence in Dublin's downtown district prevented business owners from opening shop during the course of the week. Separation women who smashed the windows of abandoned storefronts in order to pillage the luxury goods within appalled contemporary witnesses.

In first-hand accounts the Rising, the separation wives are always portrayed as either exclusively motivated by their emotional attachment to the fate of men fighting with the British army, or selfishly motivated by the availability of expensive luxury items during the Rising. Neither of these justifications can fully account for the separation women's actions, because they remove the any context about the women's lives. The men whose female relatives received separation allowances were typically members of Dublin's most socioeconomically deprived class. The women and their usually large families lived in notoriously dangerous and unsanitary tenement communities, often in just one small room. Dublin's economy was restructured during the later half of the nineteenth century in a way that forced increasing numbers of men to seek unstable work as general laborers. At the same time, women's employment opportunities began to disappear, and work within the home was prioritized. In tenement communities, which were predominantly catholic, the 'ideal' Irish woman treated her role as a mother as her most important obligation. Women were expected to do all they could to provide safe homes, warm clothing, and regular meals to their children. In Dublin's slums, fulfilling the duties of

[6] Ibid, 32.

motherhood was a constant, daily struggle against the always-imminent threats of eviction and even starvation. The reliability of the separation allowance meant that during the war, many thousand tenement mothers were able to provide their children with better resources than they had ever been able to during peacetime.

The Easter Rising halted the distribution of separation allowances and created a general shortage of resources throughout Dublin. Undoubtedly, all Dubliners were inconvenienced by the events of Easter week. However, for low-class citizens, and for separation women in particular, the Rising was especially traumatic, because it disrupted the fragile balance that allowed them to provide for their families. Tenement communities were the most likely to be affected by the cannon fire and sniping that occurred throughout the week. Mothers became increasingly desperate for food and other goods, and some turned to looting in order to fulfill those needs. They hurled insults and rocks at the rebels, because any other form of political participation was impossible. Women had extremely little political power in pre-Civil War Ireland. The separation women were excluded from even the limited forms of political agency practiced by nationalist and unionist women's groups by their lack of education, time, and finances. Contemporary accounts of the Rising, and consequently the historical texts which have relied on them, tended to overlook the circumstances of the separation women's lives. Each author's explanation of the separation women's actions was tinged by his or her own political beliefs. In describing separation women as emotionally distraught as a result of British actions, nationalists could frame opposition to the Rising as yet another unfortunate consequence of English colonial control in Ireland. Similarly, by couching separation wives' looting as selfish greediness, middle- and upper-class observers reinforced preconceived assumptions about the immorality of tenement life. Neither of these justifications fully considered the broad range of

factors that may have influenced a separation wife's decision to participate in the looting or in the attacks

Historians of Irish history have studied the era of the First World War and the Easter Rising extensively over the course of the last hundred years. These investigations have taken several forms. The histories of the Easter Rising published before the fiftieth anniversary, such as Max Caulfield's canonical 1963 text *The Easter Rebellion*, were reconstructive. Caulfield's text provided one narrative of the Rising, which was focused almost exclusively on the militaristic and political aspects of the week's events. Texts published since the 1970s have explored the broader array of possible narratives of the Rising. Such works often look at a particular facet of Irish history during the early twentieth century. Many of these works are interested in the Irish experience in and memory of World War I. Keith Jeffrey's *Ireland and the Great War* has become a modern classic in this category. Ben Novick's *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda During the First World War* examines the ways in which Irish nationalism grew in relation to the war. Texts such as Mark McCarthy's *Ireland's 1916 Rising: Explorations of History-Making, Commemoration & Heritage in Modern Times* aim to trace the various ways in which the Rising has become culturally significant in the collective memory of Ireland. A third category is interested in women's participation in advanced nationalism—Margaret Ward's *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* was crucial to my research on women's access to political recourse. A final group of work is focused on poverty in Dublin's tenement communities during the early part of the twentieth century. Joseph O'Brien's *Dear, Dirty Dublin: A City in Distress, 1899-1916* is essential, as are Kenneth Kearns' various books of oral testimony collected from tenement dwellers. Padraig Yeates' *A City in*

Wartime: Dublin 1914-1918 thoroughly investigates life in Dublin during WWI for all segments of Irish society.

The story of the separation women, which includes elements of each of these categories, is largely missing from these and other texts. The reactions of the separation wives to the Easter Rising were the result of a confluence of issues surrounding nationalism, feminism and class in Dublin during World War I. Separation women were not solely motivated by sentiment or greed, but by the unique context of their own lives. They offer an exceptional and underexplored case study into the ways in which major political, social, and economic factors intermingled to create particular responses to the Easter Rebellion. Ultimately, a separation woman made a choice when she participated in the looting of local stores or the attacks on retreating rebels. That choice may have involved emotion and selfishness, but it was also informed by tenement mothers' experiences of political repression and socioeconomic deprivation as members of Dublin's most disadvantaged communities.

Chapter 1 – Causes of the Rising

It would be difficult to locate a moment, since the island's initial colonization in 1169 by Norman invaders acting under the orders of British ruler Henry II, in which anti-British sentiment has been wholly absent in Ireland. After 1542, the year in which Henry VIII reasserted his position as King of Ireland and consequently tightened the monarchy's political control over the country, nationalist fervor in Ireland became ever more pronounced. As the nineteenth century approached, and England sought to add Ireland to its United Kingdom, separatist nationalist groups launched multiple rebellions in a desperate attempt to prevent the looming unification. Despite Theobald Wolfe Tone's efforts to draft the support of the French for the revolution that was undertaken by the Society of United Irishmen, that uprising in 1798 was eventually suppressed. Just a few years later, Robert Emmet again took up the cause of Irish sovereignty, and on the twenty-third of July 1803 skirmishes broke out across Dublin. The British quickly ended this rebellion as well, but Wolfe Tone, Emmet and other leaders were viewed by many as martyrs who had made the ultimate sacrifice for love of Ireland.

By the turn of the twentieth century, outbreaks of violence perpetrated by factional nationalist groups were relatively uncommon. The Irish Party, headed by John Redmond, had spent many years advocating for the passage of a Home Rule Bill, which would allow Ireland to establish a legislative body to control domestic affairs. Although the bill would still leave the handling of foreign relations to London's political machines, Home Rule was seen as a desirable compromise. However, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 indefinitely postponed plans for implementation of the bill. Simultaneously, a massive British Army recruiting campaign began in Ireland, which nationalists perceived as an insufferable burden and to which they responded with a fervent propaganda campaign of their own. Economic conditions, which were

still dismal following the Dublin Lockout of 1913, were further depressed by the outbreak of war. In April of 1916, this storm of dire circumstances converged into a bloody rebellion that left over 500 Dubliners dead.

The Easter Rising of 1916 cannot be described as the result of any single triggering event. Sentiment alone could not sufficiently account for the sudden upswing in violent anti-British action. Instead, the 1916 Rebellion in Ireland must be understood as the product of a concatenation of interconnected developments, in which militaristic, political, and economic factors intermingled to create an environment ripe for revolution.

Political Unrest—Home Rule and Armed Nationalism

> "Policy: National self-Determination through the recognition of the duties and rights of citizenship on the part of the individual, and by the aid and support of all movements originating from within Ireland, instinct with the National tradition, and not looking outside Ireland for the accomplishment of their aims"
>
> -From an invitation to join Sinn Fein, 9 December 1905[7]

The Home Rule Bill that was presented to the members of Britain's Parliament in 1912 was the third version of this proposed legislation. Although some Irish nationalist groups, such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Sinn Fein, maintained that total separation from England was the only means through which the Irish people could fulfill their destined nationhood, overall, by the time the Third Home Rule Bill was put forth, very few staunch separatists remained.[8] Christopher Kennedy argues that in 1912, the institution of Home Rule in Ireland "would have satisfied all but a very small handful of the most resolute separatists."[9] Some long-time nationalist figures even expressed support for the measure. Eoin MacNeill,

---

[7] "Sinn Fein Invitation" in *Irish Historical Documents Since 1800*, ed. Alan O'Day and John Stevenson (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1992), 143.
[8] Christopher Kennedy, *Genesis of the Rising, 1912-1916 A Transformation of Nationalist Opinion* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 30.
[9] Ibid, 30.

cofounder of the Gaelic League and primary founder of the Irish Volunteers, wrote an article in the newspaper of the Gaelic League on November 1 1913, which argued:

> "It is evident that the only solution now possible is for the Empire either to make terms with Ireland or to let Ireland go her own way. In any case, it is manifest that all Irish people, Unionist as well as Nationalist, are determined to have their own way in Ireland. On that point, and it is the main point, Ireland is united."[10]

MacNeill, who was among the most widely recognized and consistently active of Irish nationalists, uses language that notes that a coming to terms with England is a possibility. His implicit acknowldgement that Home Rule might be a manageable option points to the accuracy of Kennedy's claim that, before the outbreak of the First World War, nationalists in Ireland were generally supportive of a legislative resolution to their disagreement with England. The establishment of the Irish Volunteers soon after was precipitated by MacNeill's feeling that passage of the Third Home Rule Bill must be ensured by military action.

Even within England, many outspoken political theorists believed that Home Rule was the most practical solution to the persistent outbreaks of anti-Unionist fervor in Ireland, although their reasoning was rarely related to the need for Irish self-determination. Frederick Scott Oliver was one such theorist. In a treaty titled *The Irish Question, Federation or Secession*, which was published in New York in 1918, Oliver sought to disprove the argument that Home Rule was disadvantageous for England. He wrote,

> "It is said that we ought not to undertake this constitutional change at the present time during the progress of the great war…In the first place, the evils which the change is designed to cure have been enormously aggravated—have indeed, been brought to a head—by the war…In the second place, constitutional change cannot be attempted at a more propitious time—with a view to the thoroughness and justice of the settlement—than when the spirit of the party is in abeyance, as it is now."[11] (Oliver 22)

---

[10] Martin, F. X., Éamon Ó Cuív, Ruan O'Donnell, and Mícheál Ó hAodha, eds., *Irish Volunteers 1913-1915 Recollections and Documents* (Sallins: Merrion, 2013), 68.

[11] Frederick Scott Oliver, *The Irish Question, Federation or Secession* (New York: Press of the Civil Service Print. Co., 1918), 22.

Even after the violence of the Easter Rising, many in England still felt that Home Rule was a possible and even a desirable method through which nationalism in Ireland might be permanently squelched. The war, in Oliver's eyes, had managed simultaneously to stoke the furor of nationalism while also weakening it, the consequence of which was that Home Rule must be instituted immediately, to prevent further flares of anti-Union violence, and before those flares that remained began to rise up again.

Despite Oliver's enthusiasm for Home Rule, those small factions within Ireland which were devoted to the idea of an independent nation had, years before the Rising and even before the War, begun a campaign to reveal the fraudulent nature of these legislative measures. In an articled published in the newspaper of the Gaelic League on November 8 1913, Pádraig Pearse argued that for advanced Irish nationalists such as himself,

> "the coming of Home Rule, if come it does, will make no material difference in the nature of the work that lies before us…There remains, under Home Rule as in its absence, the substantial task of achieving the Irish Nation. I do not think it is going to be achieved without stress and trial, without suffering and bloodshed."[12]

For Pearse, as for others who desired a wholly independent Irish Nation, Home Rule would make little difference. Although this opinion was initially shared by a relatively small group, the indefinite postponement of Home Rule implementation, which was decided upon at the outbreak of the war, increased its popularity. While Home Rule had technically passed on September 18 1914, a bill submitted at the same time ensured that Home Rule would not actually be implemented until the War was over. The Irish Volunteers, who were committed to the establishment of an independent Irish governing body, became increasingly radical, and began to move away from the possibility of a legislative solution, towards the idea that an independent Ireland could be attained only through violence.

---

[12] Martin, *Irish Volunteers*, 71.

The methods employed by the Volunteers and other nationalist groups began to change drastically after the indefinite postponement of Home Rule. Although militaristic training had always been part of the agenda, leaders began to stress the importance of organized preparation for potential conflicts with British soldiers and police. In the same article in which he had declared Home Rule an insufficient solution, Pearse, who was to become one of the most influential organizers of the Easter Rising a few years later, wrote passionately about the fundamental need for Ireland's nationalist army, the Irish Volunteers, to be armed. He wrote, "A thing that stands demonstrable is that nationhood is not achieved otherwise than in arms…Ireland unarmed will attain just as much freedom as it is convenient for England to give her; Ireland armed will attain ultimately just as much freedom as she wants."[13] For Pearse as for other advanced nationalists, weapons were a factor absolutely necessary to Ireland's ability to ensure her independent nationhood.

Bulmer Hobson, a founding member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), was instrumental in organizing an event that became known as the Howth Gun Running. On the twenty-sixth of July 1914, a group of nationalists returned from Hamburg, where they had purchased fifteen hundred guns. Hobson wrote that although he recognized that this number of rifles would be insufficient to arm all of the Volunteers, "if we could bring them in in a sufficiently spectacular manner we should probably solve our financial problem."[14] Thus, the boat carrying the rifles landed at Howth, a location that was carefully chosen in order to bring the most attention to the event. Hobson noted that he had "decided to land the guns during daylight, in the most open manner possible and as near to Dublin as possible" (in Martin 46), so that sympathizers to the cause of Irish independence could not miss the Volunteers as they marched

[13] Ibid, 71.
[14] Ibid, 46.

back into Dublin, guns in hand. Although there was a brief skirmish with the police, Hobson noted:

> "Of the 900 guns and 26,000 rounds of ammunition landed at Howth, none were lost except the nineteen captured by the police…With the Howth gun-running, we not only succeeded in landing a considerable number of arms but I also succeeded in my second objective of getting something done in a sufficiently spectacular manner to make people subscribe to our funds…after the gun running we never had any serious financial worries."[15]

The Howth Gun Running of 1914 was successful not only at gaining Pearse's much-desired guns for the Volunteers, but also at drumming up support—in the following months, monetary donations to the Volunteers rose, as did the number of members in both the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army. In the same November 1913 article Pearse wrote,

> "I should like to see any and every body of Irish citizens armed. We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms. We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and a sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are many things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them."[16]

Ben Novick has described the 1914 Gun Running, like the Rising itself, as "an act of propaganda in action," which, although it represented little in terms of military victory, stood as "a supreme moment in the long war of words against Britain."[17] In the aftermath of the Howth Gun Running, the Volunteers were armed, ready to defend Ireland's nationhood and to free Ireland from the slavery of colonial rule—and they were prepared to achieve those ends with bloodshed.

---

[15] Ibid, 51.
[16] Ibid, 72.
[17] Ben Novick, "The Arming of Ireland: Gun-Running and the Great War, 1914-16" in *Ireland and the Great War: A War to Unite Us All?*, ed. Adrian Gregory and Senia Pašeta (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 108.

Economic Upheaval—The Unending Dublin Lockout

> "1913 was the *annus teribilis* of the Dublin working class. Before it ended, a bewildering variety of strikes, often with no obvious relation to one another, rocked the port and the city of Dublin in a manner characterized by the Lord Mayor as tantamount to "civil war."
> -Joseph V. O'Brien[18]

In the first decade of the twentieth century, Dublin, which was often described as the 'second city' of the British Empire, was witness to a significantly wider socioeconomic divide than were other large European cities. Whereas in comparable cities in England less than ten percent of the working male population was employed in the category of general laborer, in Dublin, that number was between one-quarter and one-third of the total industrial workforce.[19] General laborers were employed not in long-term positions but in unreliable work that was often available only as needed on a seasonal basis. The preponderance of general laborers suggests that in Dublin "this class of worker arose, not as in England or Scotland from the needs of established trades, but out of the general lack of varied and widespread industrial employment."[20] As a result, many members of Dublin's workforce were relegated to work as floating laborers and domestic servants, who were constantly seeking out poorly paid and erratic jobs. Joseph O'Brien has argued that Dublin, in response to this irregularly structured economy, "possessed a workforce that was extremely vulnerable to victimization by employers and in addition suffered long hours and low wages in a city where the consequences of the loss of a job could often mean not alternative employment but either emigration or the workhouse."[21] In a city that already boasted the most squalid tenements in Europe, the loss of a job might have equaled starvation for an entire family.

---

[18] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 222.
[19] Ibid, 200.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

Dublin's capitalists were altogether unwilling to bend to the demands of the burgeoning union movements, and those who oversaw businesses in the transportation sector were particularly trenchant in their criticisms of organized labor. The tensions between company owners and leaders of labor movements grew increasingly fraught during the early months of 1913. The year would eventually be "noted for the highest number of recorded strikes in the United Kingdom."[22] On Thursday, January 30, the general laborers who worked at the city docks went on strike, beginning a dispute that would remain unsolved until later April. Between January and August, thirty separate labor disputes occurred throughout Dublin.[23] Although these initial strikes caused some unrest, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) strike, which began on August 26, ushered in a months-long period of labor discontent, which left a major portion of Dublin's workforce without jobs or payment. The tram workers, who had been threatening to strike for some time, abandoned their cars—an estimated 70 of 200 trams were suddenly without drivers.[24] Other workers soon joined the strike. By mid-September, nine thousand Dubliners were out of work, and by the end of the lockout, between twenty and twenty-five thousand citizens were without jobs.[25] Along with dependents this represented a full quarter of the city's entire population, and the majority of those suffering were members of the population "least able to withstand prolonged privation"—the situation "had approached crisis proportions,"[26] Not only were workers unable to secure employment, but, as a result of the ongoing struggle, "food and coal prices increased, potatoes almost doubling in price…some men had received ejectment notices as tenants of employer-owned dwellings…hospitals were running

[22] Theresa Moriarty, "Work, Warfare and Wages: Industrial Controls and Irish Trade Unionism in the First World War", in *Ireland and the Great War*, ed. Gregory and Pašeta, 74.
[23] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 223.
[24] Ibid, 225.
[25] Ibid, 231, 234.
[26] Ibid, 234.

out of supplies of cotton wool because no ships were arriving in Dublin from England,"[27] Rumors spread of a plan to send indigent children of the workless poor to Protestant families in England as a last-ditch attempt to stave off a starvation epidemic. A resolution was desperately needed.

Despite the increasingly horrific consequences of the lockout, employers were unwilling to make lasting changes to the structure of the workday and pay scale for transport and general workers. T. M. Healy, speaking on behalf of the Employer's Committee, stated that "the employers are much more concerned to put an end to the present difficulties than to consider problems related to future unrest."[28] The *Irish Times*, a resolutely Unionist newspaper, published an editorial in which the author argued that "the employers are fighting for the trade and prosperity of Dublin—an issue which concerns every citizen."[29] Although some British organizations were willing to help families of the workless by sending monetary aid, the British-owned companies of Dublin made no concessions. Ultimately, the ITGWU was defeated, although O' Brien writes,

> "There could be no real victory for anyone after such an exhausting and bitter 22 week struggle, with nearly 2 million man-days of work lost, five persons killed and hundreds injured, the social and economic life of the city entirely dislocated, the trade of the port crippled under staggering blows, over £1 million lost to businessmen, and untold expenses incurred by the government for police and military duty."[30]

In a city that already had at best a tenuous grasp on economic stability, the 1913 lockout created huge, and lasting, problems. Jeffrey argues that the "particular strength" of labor-oriented nationalism in Dublin stemmed from the high rates of unemployment in the city.[31] The lockout

---

[27] Ibid, 231.
[28] O'Day, *Irish Historical Documents*, 150.
[29] Ibid, 150.
[30] O'Brien, Dear Dirty Dublin, 237.
[31] Keith Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 26.

had demonstrated the British government's unwillingness to foster Irish trade, and the distrust many Dubliners felt in its aftermath was strengthened even further by the outbreak of the First World War. "Unlike Belfast, much of Dublin's industry was of a nonessential character…and a slackening of economic activity enhanced the potential for social and political unrest," Jeffrey argues.[32] The outbreak of war forced up the cost of living, and food in particular was affected. In Dublin, the price of bread grew by a halfpenny in just two months.[33] An early public response to the war by members of the Irish trade union movement was the Irish Trade Union Congress manifesto, "Why should Ireland starve?'…It evoked memories of the famine," proclaiming "in militant language that Irish labor would not comply with government wartime measures that put British needs above Irish necessity."[34] Dublin, still wracked by the long battle between workers and owners, was economically depressed even further during the initial outbreak of the war. Many in the city regarded England as having intentionally deprived Dublin and its citizens of work, and anti-British sentiment grew stronger in response to the socioeconomic upheavals of 1913 and 1914.

Military Turmoil—Propaganda and World War I Enlistment

> "The First World War provided both the opportunity and the timing for the Irish republican rising of Easter 1916. It presented a suitably violent model for political action and defined the moment when that action was likely to occur. Like the war, the Easter Rising was simply the 'continuation of politics by other means'. For Irish separatists, the Great War offered both moment and mode."[35] -Keith Jeffrey

The relationship between the Irish public and the First World War was troubled from the initial eruption of the conflict. The war further depressed an already failing economy in

[32] Ibid, 26.
[33] Moriarty, "Work, Warfare and Wages", 76.
[34] Ibid, 76.
[35] Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War*, 47.

Dublin, and it also pushed back the implementation of Home Rule. Although these political and economic consequences of the war were extremely influential in instigating the 1916 Rising, the war also carried with it specific military factors which contributed to the anti-British sentiment that ultimately gave rise to the Rebellion. In response to the outbreak of the war, England began a massive enlistment campaign in Ireland. Although Ireland's initial enlistment statistics had been relatively equal to those of the other English kingdoms, Scotland and Wales, the number of Irish men choosing to enlist in the British Army fell off quickly. The lowest point of enlistment, before the final push, was between February and August of 1917.[36] Another issue that the British enlistment campaign aimed to address was the discrepancy between enrollment in cities and in the countryside. During the first few months of the war, in Ulster, Dublin, Wicklow, and Kildare, recruitment was 127 for every 10,000 population. However, in the agricultural districts of southern Ireland, that number was just 32.[37] The rural portions of the country had always been more strongly nationalist than the cities, which often boasted higher British and Protestant populations, and the enlistment numbers reflected that divide.

Many in Ireland were suspicious of the enrollment statistics. James Connolly, co-founder of the Irish Citizen Army and outspoken socialist revolutionary, felt that Irish men joined the British Army not out of any connection to England, but instead in response to "economic conscription" practiced by the British officials. "Fighting at the front today…there are many thousand who should revolt against what they are doing, but who must nevertheless continue fighting and murdering because they are deprived of a living at home, and compelled to enlist that those dear to them might not starve."[38] Connolly's rhetoric reflects the mood among many Irish nationalists that, by forcing workers out of their jobs, the British army was

[36] Ibid, 7.
[37] Ibid, 6.
[38] Ibid.

functionally creating an army of Irishmen who had no choice but to join up. Connolly's socialist paper *Workers' Republic* reported that "dismissing men of military age from their employment, both married and single, and endeavoring to starve themselves and their families, is a very obnoxious form of conscription, as it enables the well-to-do and upper classes to evade their duties. Nearly all the employers are doing it."[39] Although economic conscription could not explain the enlistment patterns of every Irishman who joined the British Army during the course of the war, it was certainly perceived as the primary explanatory force by many members of the nationalist groups. As the war progressed and the threat of conscription became increasingly evident, Irish Nationalists became even more concerned about the role of Irish citizens fighting in the British Army. Joseph O'Brien argues that "It was the threat of conscription that finally demonstrated the lack of enthusiasm for enlistment in Ireland."[40] Suddenly, the seditious groups which had been attempting to combat the British recruitment campaign since the outbreak of the war were pushed to the forefront, as Irish men and women strove to prevent mandatory enlistment.

In the 1905 Sinn Fein invitation quoted at the beginning of this chapter, there is a constitution, which lists as its sixth criterion: "No member of the British armed forces, or pensioner therefrom, to be eligible for membership, nor shall any other person who has otherwise taken an oath of allegiance to the British Crown be admitted."[41] Nearly a decade before the beginning of the First World War, the members of Sinn Fein were certain that they did not want any persons associated with the British Crown in any way to take part in their activities. As the war progressed, and as advanced nationalists began a massive campaign to counteract the efforts of England's Lord Kitchener, this concern changed from trying to keep Irishmen who had been

[39] Moriarty, "Work, Warfare and Wages", 75-76.
[40] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 256.
[41] O'Day, *Irish Historical Documents*, 143.

members of the army out, to trying to keep Irishmen from joining the British army in the first place. In his study of the role of advanced nationalist propaganda during the First World War, Ben Novick concludes that "by linking support for advanced nationalism with halting the slaughter of war, propagandists helped to simultaneously shatter pro-war propaganda and smooth the way for the advent of a revolutionary government in Ireland."[42] Novick thus argues that gradually increasing popular support for Irish nationalism, which would eventually lead to the bloody events of Easter Week 1916, could not have happened without the propaganda campaigns of the Great War. The oppositional structure, which allowed nationalists to promote claims about their own motives while simultaneously undercutting the legitimacy of the British claims, allowed for the true structure of nationalism to develop. Anti-conscription became the rallying issue around which different nationalists groups could converge, and through which they could attract the support of other Irishmen. The Easter Rising of 1916 arose out of a confluence of drastic political change, constant economic entanglements, and a propagandistic military campaign strategy against which nationalists could frame themselves. Without this unlikely mixture of events, the nationalist fervor that gave rise to the emancipatory destruction of the Easter Rebellion might never have occurred.

[42] Ben Novick, *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda During the First World War* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 247.

Chapter 2 – The Rising and its Participants

By the early months of 1916, the leadership of both major advanced nationalist organizations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), were convinced that a rising was destined to happen soon. In January, James Connolly was voted on to the IRB's Military Council, which had been tasked with creating a detailed plan for the upcoming rebellion.[43] Connolly's appointment ensured that the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) would also be closely involved with the events of Easter week. On Wednesday, the nineteenth of April, the *Aud*, a German vessel carrying more then 20,000 arms to be used by the Volunteers during the Rising, arrived in Tralee Bay. Two days later Sir Roger Casement, a fervent Irish nationalist who had been responsible for procuring the German weapons, arrived in Dublin.[44] British forces soon captured Casement, and the Volunteers were consequently unable to land the arms. In response to this major handicap to his plans, on Saturday the twenty-second Eoin MacNeill, Chief of Staff for the Volunteers, sent out an order halting the previous command to begin the Rising the following day, Easter Sunday. A notice that the Volunteers' plans had been cancelled was published in the *Sunday Independent*.[45] On the twenty-third, it was decided during a meeting of the Military Council that the Rebellion would take place on Monday. But, the next morning, just fifteen hundred men and women gathered for the Rising. The confusion caused by the cancelation and consequent rescheduling of the Rebellion meant that the nationalists were left to fight their battle with significantly fewer insurgents than they had anticipated.[46] Nonetheless, on Monday, the twenty-fourth of April 1916, the Easter Rising, arguably the single most influential event in Irish Nationalist history until the Civil War, began.

---

[43] Annie Ryan, *Witnesses Inside the Easter Rising* (Dublin: Liberties, 2005), 19.
[44] Ibid, 20.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

Over the course of that week, skirmishes between the nationalist rebels and the British forces unfolded across the whole city. The General Post Office (GPO), which was among the greatest symbols of British colonial control over Ireland, became the headquarters of the Nationalists, and a banner proclaiming Ireland's status as an independent republic was strung up on the building's façade. Although much of the fighting was localized in downtown on the North side of the Liffey River, smaller conflicts happened daily far into the suburban area. Sniping from rooftops became a regular occurrence, and abandoned cars were piled up to serve as makeshift barricades, to prevent the British troops pouring into Dublin from all over the country from accessing the rebel strongholds. Anyone caught in the crossfire between groups of nationalists and British army forces was at risk of being accidentally shot. Anyone wearing khaki, or in any way resembling a British soldier, might be gunned down at any moment. The city was in absolute chaos, and yet, initially, the majority of its residents had no idea that a rebellion was happening around them. The first outbreaks of violence were treated with utter confusion by the many thousands who lived in the city but were neither British nor closely involved with nationalist movements. As the fighting intensified and the number of civilians killed by accident grew, the responses of many Dubliners changed from shock and terror at the sudden violence to anger that their families were being endangered and their homes were being destroyed. When the shooting finally ended following the rebels' unconditional surrender on Saturday, April 29, many civilians took to the streets to taunt, spit, and in some cases throw stones and bricks at the insurgents as they were marched to jails throughout the city.

In 1948, decades after Ireland gained her independence, the Bureau of Military History was established, and tasked with finding survivors of the Rising and the Civil War so that their memories of the events could be preserved. These records, which are archived online, contain a

staggering number of references to the 'Separation Wives.' In almost every instance where a participant describes being heckled or attacked by a crowd of Dubliners, he or she applies that damning descriptor, simultaneously labeling his or her attackers as lower class and as dependent on the good will of the British Army. The women and children who comprised the largest portion of these angry crowds were wives, offspring, mothers and sisters of men fighting in the British army, and were living off the separation allowances British soldiers' families were allotted. Although the actions of these female crowd members seem extreme, in many ways, such exclamations were the sole process through which they could express their anger at the week's events. As working-class Dubliners, they were excluded from any legitimate form of participation in the events of the Rising. As women, they had extremely circumscribed access to political expression in pre-Civil War Ireland, even within the nationalist groups. As single wives, often with several children and labor-intensive jobs, they were even further removed from the range of conventional political actors. Their lives, like those of all Dubliners, were hugely affected by the Rising, and their seemingly extreme expression of hatred towards the nationalist rebels was ultimately the only means of expressing discontent to which they had access.

Female Participation in Irish Politics

In 1911, the most recent census year at the time of the Rising in 1916, the population of Dublin city was just over three hundred thousand individuals.[47] On Monday, the first day of the rebellion, "fewer than one thousand Volunteers and about two hundred men and women of the Citizen Army marched out."[48] The rebels thus represented a tiny portion of the city's total population. Although the existence of Sinn Fein as a political party was well known, the

[47] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 284.
[48] Ibid, 258.

activities of the Volunteers, the IRB and the ICA were hardly common knowledge. To some degree, the populace's utter confusion at the sudden outbreak of violence was intentional on the part of the nationalist organizers – leaders felt that secrecy was necessary in order to keep the British army unaware of nationalist plans. The number of British forces in the city was also small relative to the population – just 2,265 men and 120 officers stationed in barracks throughout the city.[49] Of that number, only 400 were trained to respond quickly to possible outbreaks of unexpected violence.[50] On the first days of the Rising, before two thousand additional troops were brought in from other outposts throughout the country, the number of participants who were engaged in active conflict was incredibly low, just over thirty-five hundred total. Nonetheless, the fighting made the entire city grind to a halt, as those who lived close to the gunfire tried to stay safe, and those who lived further afield tried desperately to get news of the events unfolding in the city.

Although the men fighting in the GPO and at other nationalist strongholds have received the most attention in the years since the Rising, they were not the only rebels active during Easter Week. In the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, which was hung up outside the GPO for all those who passed to read, the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic, the name by which the authors called themselves, declared that "The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens."[51] This rhetoric reflected language that had been used earlier, at the founding of the Irish Volunteers on 25 November 1913. The organization's manifesto noted, "There will also be work for women to do, and there are signs that the women of Ireland, true to their record, are especially enthusiastic for the success of the

[49] Ibid, 259.
[50] Ibid.
[51] O'Day, *Irish Historical Documents*, 160-61.

Irish Volunteers."[52] The Irish nationalist movement was often perceived as being in line with the feminist movement, which had been underway for many years already in Ireland. Some of the most prominent members of the nationalist movements were women. Maud Gonne, often remembered as a romantic interest of author W. B. Yeats, and Countess Constance Markievicz, Anglo-Irish former wife of a Polish count, were the most recognizable female faces.

For Countess Markievicz, who ultimately helped found the first Sinn Fein government after the Civil War and was among the first women worldwide to hold a major cabinet position, initially nationalism "seemed to offer a public space to resist both colonial and domestic domination for many Irish women, who dreamed of a utopian postcolonial Irish nation where all inequalities of gender would be washed away in the revolutionary tide."[53] Markievicz was, from the beginning, one of the most influential members of the nationalist movement, and along with Commandant Michael Mallin, she oversaw members of the Citizen Army while they occupied the College of Surgeons during the Rising.[54] She urged Nationalists to "Fix your mind on the ideal of Ireland free, with her women enjoying the full rights of citizenship in their own nation, and no one will be able to side-track you."[55] Markievicz's strong belief that feminism and nationalism should work closely together was a result of her firm conviction that in a free Irish State, men and women would enjoy equal privileges. Although the language of the Volunteers' Proclamation supports the Countess' belief in a free and equal post-British Irish Republic, the actual work that female members of the Irish Volunteers were permitted to participate in was drastically different from that undertaken by their male peers.

---

[52] Martin, *Irish Volunteers*, 105.
[53] Lisa Weihman, "Doing My Bit for Ireland: Transgressing Gender in the Easter Rising", *Éire-Ireland* 39 (2004): 243.
[54] Ryan, *Witnesses Inside*, 20.
[55] Weihman, "Doing My Bit", 243.

On Thursday April 5 1914, a new women's group called Cumann na mBan (or The Irishwomen's Council) was formed in Dublin. This group merged with and functionally dissolved Maud Gonne's earlier radical women's collective, Inghindhe na hÉireann ('Daughters of Ireland' in English). This first meeting was held in a hotel and was led by Kathleen Lane-O'Kelly. The organization was distinct from the Irish Volunteers, but its leadership was subordinate to the Volunteers' executive. Although the constitution of Cumann na mBan stressed that the women would be essential to the military success of the Volunteers, the document also created a requirement that the organization 'assist' the Volunteers.[56] Margaret Ward argues that the language of Cumann na mBan's constitution creates a system where "women were to be given a role, but a role that was carefully defined and limiting."[57] Later that April, Caitlin de Brun, a leader of the Irishwomen's Council, wrote an article which concluded that "there could be no more 'intense delight' for patriotic Irishwomen than making flags for the Volunteers."[58] Cumann na mBan's members were firmly confined to an auxiliary role, which focused more on raising money and gathering supplies than on active political, much less military, participation. Sinn Fein also framed the ideal form of female participation in nationalist groups as chiefly domestic. The organization included in their publications a column aimed at women, which was titled "Letters to Nora".[59] On 19 May 1906, the letter began, "The work is calling, I said. It awaits us in our own homes. We must be clear about that point. No Irishwomen can afford to claim a part in the public duties of patriotism until she has fully satisfied the claims her 'home' makes on her."[60] Thus, while women are encouraged to support the work being done by the

[56] Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1995), 88.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid, 92.
[59] Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 268.
[60] Ibid.

advanced nationalists, Sinn Fein believes that they should only participate in that work themselves once the obligation of their domestic lives have been fulfilled. By joining Cumann n mBan Irish women "challenged a great many more cultural norms, given the deep-rooted conservatism of Irish society, than did men joining the Volunteers."[61] Open participation in a nationalist group meant a woman either had a family who was committed to the cause, or had independent funds that she could use to join without seeking familial approval. Either way, the choice to join represented a challenge to the accepted role of the Irish woman who was primarily concerned with her family's domestic life.

Dublin women's decision to participate either in nationalist auxiliary organizations or in groups devoted to helping the war effort was not based solely on the individual's political intuitions. All forms of voluntary work required free time, and as such, participation was exclusionary based on socioeconomic status. The inaugural meeting of Cumann na mBan was held at four in the afternoon at an upscale hotel on the south side of the river – "hardly a convenient time for working women."[62] The appeal of the Women's Council and other such organizations "was not to the ordinary woman—the shop assistant, clerical worker, or mother with young children—but to those who would have time to devote to the establishment of the new organization. In other words, women who did not need to work."[63] Although meetings were eventually held in the evenings, after complaints about the scheduling were published in the newspapers, the organization's implicit assumption that its members would be drawn exclusively from the class of women who had free time during the day points to one of the many ways in which women from lower socioeconomic strata were excluded from organized participation in Irish nationalist movements.

---

[61] Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 102.
[62] Ibid, 92.
[63] Ibid, 92-93.

Cumann na mBan was preferential towards upper-class women on the whole, but, like the Volunteers, they were particularly opposed to enlistment in the British Army. Their predecessors, the members of Inghinidhe na hÉireann, shared that opposition. In the December 1910 issue of their monthly magazine, *Bean na hEireann*, an article titled "The Ethics of Anti-Enlisting" included a lengthy explanation for why Irish men ought not join the British armed forces:

> "The choice is no new one; it is but the old, old struggle between the needs of the body and the soul. It is not only to-day, or even in Ireland that men have had to decide between comfort and security, with a traitor's heart and perjured soul to keep you company along life's road, or the fate of a starved and homeless wanderer, despised and rejected. It is only a great love of country, a high sense of duty, and a great feeling of national responsibility that will make a man choose starvation and the workhouse to enlisting. But the man who, knowing what he does deliberately chooses hardship, starvation and the workhouse, to the comfort and security of the British army has the soul of a hero, a spirit of renunciation and patriotism as great as a Tone or an Emmet."[64]

The women who authored this article make a direct connection to the idea of economic conscription as articulated by James Connolly. To deny the comfort and stability of army work was a heroic effort, but it demonstrated an Irish man's commitment to country and to cause, and therefore was worth the effort. Women who encouraged their husbands to join the must realize that "by associating themselves with soldiers who are betraying their country" they are complicit in that betrayal.[65] In their 1914 Manifesto, the women of Cumann na mBan wrote:

> "We came into being with the cause of Irish liberty and to organize Irishwomen in furtherance of that object. We feel bound to make the pronouncement that to urge or encourage Irish Volunteers to enlist in the British Army cannot, under any circumstances, be regarded as consistent with the work we have set ourselves to do."[66]

This statement explicitly to denies separation wives, or any other female family members of British Army soldiers, the ability to participate in the nationalist work being conducted by

---

[64] "The Ethics of Anti-Enlisting", *Bean na hEireann* 2 (December 1910): 5.
[65] Ibid, 6.
[66] Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, 101.

Cumann na mBan. Whether the organization included this rhetoric specifically as an admonition to war wives is uncertain, but that those wives would have felt excluded from further participation in the organization is undeniable. Women's ability to participate in nationalist movements was extremely limited regardless of economic status. For Dublin's poorer women, and particularly separation wives, the challenge was even greater, as both the organization and the rhetoric of the most prominent women's nationalist organizations were structured in ways which worked to prohibit their involvement.

On the other end of the spectrum, unionist women's groups that were involved in supporting the British war effort were equally focused on attracting women from the upper echelons of Dublin society. In her study of women's voluntary war work during World War One in Dublin, Eileen Reilly argues that, contrary to the long-accepted idea that support for the British troops was undertaken primarily by Protestant women with Anglo-Irish backgrounds, in actuality middle-class women of all religious backgrounds took part.[67] She notes that, nonetheless, because "voluntary service required the investment of time with no remuneration, women active in such work necessarily had leisure time and stable financial circumstances which permitted them to pursue these activities."[68] As with Cumann na mBan, the organizations which aimed to support the British war effort relied almost exclusively on the work of middle- to upper-class Dublin women. As a result, poorer women who may have agreed with the work being done by women's groups on either end of the political spectrum, nationalist or unionist, were unable to participate because the basic structure of their daily lives prohibited it.

In a January 1903 letter to his erstwhile sweetheart, W. B. Yeats described Maud Gonne as "our great lady," writing:

---

[67] Eileen Reilly, "Women and Voluntary War Work", in *Ireland and the Great War*, ed. Gregory and Pašeta, 66.
[68] Ibid.

> "You possess your influence in Ireland very largely because you come to the people from above. You represent a superior class, a class whose people are more independent, have a more beautiful life, a more refined life…Maud Gonne is surrounded by romance. She puts from her what seems an easy & splendid life that she may devote herself to the people."[69]

For Yeats, Gonne's status as a member of the upper class gave her a greater ability to help the struggling and oppressed. In his eyes, that someone of her refinement and beauty would be willing to fight on behalf of those less fortunate should be considered a boon to the movements which she deigned to help. Yet, Yeats' comments also reveal the deep class divisions that were endemic to the women's movements in Ireland, on the part of both the nationalists and the unionists. Dana Hearne has argued that throughout these movements, "there was a deep consciousness of the systematic social injustice that women of all classes suffered because of their sex."[70] Although there may have been widespread acknowldgement that women of all social strata suffered as a result of strongly held ideas of femininity and masculinity in Irish society, the day-to-day functioning of groups which encouraged women's involvement in the political environment surrounding the 1916 Rising was highly exclusionary, and prevented lower class women from gaining access to any form of organized political participation.

Confusion, Misinformation, Destruction: Observer Narratives of the Rising

> "At that meeting Thomas MacDonagh told us definitely that there was going to be a Rising. He did not say when, but he said it would be in the near future. He told us it would be an all-Ireland Rising, that we would not win, but that we would keep fighting the British for so long that we would attract world-wide attention…MacDonagh said that the first fight would stir the young men who were not with us yet, and that we would have a fight in which practically the whole country would take part, that the whole country would rise a second time and it would be a fight of a different nature."[71]
>
> -Frank Henderson, Irish Volunteer

---

[69] Gerry Kearns, "Mother Ireland and the Revolutionary Sisters", *Cultural Geographies* 11 (2004): 456-457.
[70] Dana Hearne, "The Irish Citizen 1914-1916: Nationalism, Feminism, and Militarism", *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 18 (1992): 1.
[71] Frank Henderson, *Frank Henderson's Easter Rising: Recollections of a Dublin Volunteer*. (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1998), 33.

Frank Henderson was an Irish Volunteer who claimed in his memoirs that his family had been fervently nationalistic for decades by the time of the 1916 Rising. Henderson's grandfather had been active with nationalist groups, and the tradition had carried through the generations. Henderson himself had been active with the Volunteers since the organization's inception, and he was appointed Captain of 'F' Brigade in the days leading up to the Rising. Despite his high standing within the nationalist ranks, in his statement to the Bureau of Military History in 1948 Henderson claimed to have little knowledge that a Rising was certain to happen until just days before the event. He describes the meetings and lectures given by the Volunteers, where leadership argued over the possible effects of a Rising. James Connolly, in a speech that, in hindsight, would come to be seen as staggeringly inaccurate, argued that the British "would never use artillery against the buildings in the city owing to the amount of English money invested in such property."[72] Henderson described this process, whereby the officers "were gradually brought to the realization that there would be a Rising soon," as "the preparation of minds more than anything else."[73] Henderson's own sense of confusion would be hugely multiplied in the minds of Dublin's civilians, who witnessed the unfolding of the events over the next few days with disbelief.

There are a few surviving witness accounts of the events of Easter week 1916. Unlike the reports collected by the Bureau of Military History of participants that focus on military happenings, these accounts give testament to the swirl of misinformation, the terror of random violence, the threat of lack of resources, and the discontent about the destruction of the city to which civilians were treated during the course of the Rising. Alfred Fannin was a wealthy manager of a family-owned medical and surgical supply company located on downtown's

[72] Ibid, 32.
[73] Ibid.

Grafton Street. On the morning of April 23, he found he was unable to get into downtown to work because of the havoc caused by the rebelling nationalists. Without anything else to do, he sat down to compose a letter to his brother, Edward, who was stationed with the Royal Army Medical Corps in Malta, in an attempt "to write some account of what happened yesterday in Dublin."[74] He wrote that, "Although there had been some rumours during the week of trouble with the S. Fs [Sinn Feiners] no one had thought there was anything in it," probably as a result of the notice MacNeill had published the previous day in the newspaper, cancelling all planned Volunteer activities.[75] In his desperate attempt to gather information over the next few days, Fannin often recorded facts that he had overheard, and then later scratched them out when he discovered the information had been false. Overall, Fannin's letters to his brother display a sense of overwhelming confusion. He wrote that no information was to be trusted, because "of course everything is rumour and surmise."[76] On Saturday, Fannin received news that the rebels had surrendered, but cautioned that this pronouncement was "of course, provisionally speaking."[77] Newspapers were not published during the Rising, except for the staunchly unionist *Irish Times*, which dismissed the rebellion in three lines and instead focused on the war effort. Citizens were left without any reliable information in a city filled with snipers, where more civilians were killed accidentally with each passing hour.

Mary Martin was another Dubliner who was writing at the time of the Rising. Martin, a wealthy Catholic widow with twelve children, began keeping a diary after receiving notice that her son, Charlie, who was fighting in France with the Dublin Fusiliers sixth battalion, had been

---

[74] Alfred Fannin, Adrian Warwick-Haller, and Sally Warwick-Haller, *Letters from Dublin, Easter 1916: Alfred Fannin's Diary of the Rising* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), 13.
[75] Ibid, 14.
[76] Ibid, 20.
[77] Ibid, 37.

reported missing.[78] Her diary focused mainly on the day-to-day happenings of her family, and covered the first half of 1916, until July, when she received notice that Charlie had died.[79] Like Alfred Fannin, she often recorded false reports of the events of the Rising based on the rumors she heard on the street. On Friday, April 28, she wrote, "the reports today are that Bolands Bakery had been taken from the Sinn Feiners. E & J Burke's bottling Stores were burning & H & J Martin timber Stores also…It is reported the Connolly & Countess Markeivicz & Sheehy Skeffington have been shot."[80] Sheehy Skeffington was dead, and Connolly had been badly injured, but Countess Markeivicz was as yet unharmed. Martin's information, like Fannin's, was sporadic and oftentimes incorrect, dependent on stories she overheard rather than official reports. The unavailability of accurate information contributed to the sense of confusion that dominated the responses of observers during the Easter Rising.

Civilians were also witness to shows of astonishing violence, which neither they nor the city's resources were prepared for. Alfred Fannin's brother in law, Balfour, was a Senior Physician at the Royal City of Dublin Hospital.[81] Fannin writes, "Some of the wounds he said were ghastly. One man had a hole in the back of his popliteal space [behind the knee] that you could put your hand into. He will lose his leg and almost his life. Up to this morning in Baggot St. [Hospital] there have been three deaths…There has been nothing in Dublin like this in our generation."[82] Fannin's immediate recognition, on the first day of the rebellion, that what was unfolding was unlike anything else in Dublin in recent history, points to the panic by which the city was gripped from the outset. Fannin reported in his letters that Sinn Feiners inside the GPO had "barricaded all the doors" and were "fir[ing] on anyone in uniform who approached. They

[78] Isabelle Smyth, "The Story of Mary Martin (née Levins-Moore), 1866-1955". *The Diary of Mary Martin*.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Mary Martin, *Diary*. <http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/>.
[81] Fannin, Letters from Dublin, 15.
[82] Ibid, 17-19.

have blocked the streets nearing Stephen's Green, and while they allow civilians to walk about are shooting anyone they see in khaki."[83] Civilians were, for the most part, allowed to walk about the city during the Rising, but to do so was incredibly dangerous, as sniping continued throughout the week, and by far the largest group killed were uninvolved Dubliners. Fannin wrote that although he had "not heard of cases of civilians or men not in uniform being shot without reason," nonetheless "many have been shot accidentally."[84] Dublin's residents, for the most part, did not directly participate in the violence of the Rising, but they were its most numerous victims.

A total of 429 individuals were killed during the course of the Easter Rising. Of those, 310 were civilians. Similarly, of the 2,582 Dubliners injured, 2,208 were nonparticipating civilians.[85] The confusion and misinformation about the Rising led to a huge, unnecessary number of civilian injuries and deaths. O'Brien writes that "No citizen was unaffected by the Rising, for all were subject to curfew and few indeed escaped some privation arising from the interruption of milk and food deliveries, the closing of shops, and the cessation of the gas supply…observers commented on the unexpected conjunction of society dames and 'shawlies' at the baker's cart."[86] The lack of resources was further compounded by the breakdown of the city's infrastructure. The conflict had left much of downtown, particularly on the poorer north side of the Liffey, in a state of total destruction. A few days after the Rising concluded, Mary Martin took a trip into downtown. She was aghast to find the city in shambles:

> "The front of the College is much damaged. After Lunch we walked down to Sackville St & although prepared for great havoc, it is much worse than I anticipated. From O'Connell Bridge to Cathedral Lane past Earl St is utterly destroyed being only a heap [of] shouldering rubbish with a few facades standing to mark where some of the more

[83] Ibid, 19-20.
[84] Ibid, 25.
[85] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 263.
[86] Ibid.

> important building stood. The G. P. O. is only a skeleton front the interior being completely gone."[87]

The destruction was visible everywhere, and the total value of the damage reached into the millions. Many tenements in the area surrounding Sackville Street had been destroyed, and images of children searching through the rubble of their homes for pieces of firewood were published in several newspapers. Women who were dependent on their husbands' army stipends could not receive them, and families were forced to loot the city's stores, just to have enough food. In reference to the devastation, Alfred Fannin wrote, "We used to think we were clear of the war here in Ireland but we have certainly got it close enough now."[88] In the aftermath of the Rising, Dublin resembled a warzone, and many of its citizens laid the blame at the rebels' feet.

"These people did not understand": Rebel Narratives of Defeat and Contempt

After the Volunteers' unconditional surrender on Saturday, April 29, British forces began to round up and arrest huge numbers of nationalist participants. Ultimately, 1,783 individuals were arrested for their roles in the Rising.[89] Frank Henderson, who was trapped in the GPO and was among the last to leave, recalls the way in which he and his fellow Volunteers were unceremoniously rounded up before being marched to prisons throughout the city. "We were all lined up on the East side of O'Connell Street…and were ordered to throw down our arms and ammunition in a heap on the road…Our names were taken by British officers, many of whom were very truculent."[90] After being gathered up, Henderson, like all other nationalists participants, was marched through the city to be held in an abandoned jail. During the course of

[87] Mary Martin, *Diary*.
[88] Fannin, *Letters from Dublin*, 30-31.
[89] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 267.
[90] Henderson, *Recollections*, 65.

this transit, the volunteers were ridiculed, cursed at, spit on, and in some cases even physically attacked with stones, by crowds of civilians who lined the streets.

Henderson recalled a few different instances of being jeered at during the course of the long march. After spending a night at the Rotunda Hospital, he and several others were marched to their permanent holding location. Henderson remembered that, during the walk, "in Dame Street I noticed there were a few civilians about, and these people cursed us as we went by."[91] Later on, "we were lined up in the square outside Stafford Station, and a crowd of civilians began to assemble and pass insulting remarks. A couple of them attacked some of our men."[92] Henderson's comments are not gender specific, and do not emphasize the class of the crowd members. Other Volunteers were not so general. Bernard McAllister, a member of the fifth battalion, remembered that "While going through the city to the Docks we got a very bad reception from the civil population. They booed us, called us ugly names and were generally hostile. This crowd represented the rabble of the city and not the ordinary citizen."[93] For McAllister, the socioeconomic status of the booing crowd is an important factor – because these individuals were "the rabble," they are not representative, in his eyes, of the ordinary Dubliner, who would not have been so crude, nor so disapproving of the nationalists' actions. Another insurgent, Robert Holland of the fourth brigade, recalled an event that happened during the Rising:

> "When I arrived at Ardee Street Brewery almost on the stroke of 12 o'clock, the gate of the Brewery was locked with a very rowdy crowd of women of the poorer classes around it. These consisted mainly of British Soldiers' wives and their dependents. They were expressing in no uncertain fashion their sympathy with the caretaker of this brewery who they said was manhandled by a lot of Sinn Feiners who had gone in and beaten him up."[94]

---

[91] Ibid, 68.
[92] Ibid, 71.
[93] Bernard McAlister, Bureau of Military History statement, 10.
[94] Robert Holland, BMH statement, 15.

Holland explicitly uses the language of British Army dependency to indict the actions of these women, although it is unclear why he suspects this about them. He also quickly labels the women as being "of the poorer classes." The motivations of these women are more clearly identified than in most accounts – they are determined to protect a fellow citizen from further encroachment by the rebels. The most in-depth of these accounts comes from Thomas Leahy, a member of the Volunteers second battalion 'E' company who was stationed at Sackville Street during the Rising.

> "After a very tiresome journey through the streets and after receiving a very hostile reception coming through High St. and Thomas St., where the wives of British Soldiers then in France or elsewhere stoned us from the windows of the houses and marched arm in arm with the escort. They were allowed to do so. However, we finally reached the barracks where another hostile crowd of people were standing around the gate and their remarks and insults were many, of course. These people did not understand at the time what was being done and that they would afterwards reap the benefit."[95]

Leahy's remarks are perhaps most telling. The separation wives in his story not only taunt the rebels and walk hand in hand with the British forces, but actually throw stones. The crowd outside the barracks is similarly virulent about its distaste for the rebels. Leahy's note that "these people" could not understand the implication of the events they had witnessed points to the class dimension that was so ingrained in the Rising. His sense that these angry individuals ought to recognize him and his fellow rebels as heroes demonstrates the cognitive distance between the nationalists and the Dubliners who had to deal with the aftermath of the Rising. The Separation Wives, like the other members of the crowd, lack the agency to change their situations – Leahy's rhetoric demonstrates his belief that the general public of Dublin was incapable of even basic understanding of the importance of nationalist movements. The crowd's insults are therefore not an expression of any political orientation, but are instead the incoherent exclamations of the uninformed.

[95] Thomas Leahy, BMH statement, 17-18.

In his seminal work *Ireland and the Great War*, Keith Jeffrey notes that "there is, of course, a political dimension to memories such as these: opposition to the Rising exists, but in effect it comes only from people who depended on 'economic conscription'".[96] Although there is certainly a way in which these stories of being harassed by underclass women might ultimately serve to demonstrate the strength of the rebels' claims, the sheer frequency with which these accounts occur in the soldiers' recollections demonstrates that the stories were not entirely false. Groups of poor Dublin women, often accompanied by their young children, gathered throughout the week of the Rising and in its aftermath to heckle and abuse nationalist insurgents. Whether these women were all dependent on British Army family stipends is uncertain, but that the economically challenged women of the city were furious at the death and destruction the Rising wrought on their lives is indisputable. Shut out from any form of organized participation in the events of the week by their gender and class, and more greatly affected by the devastation of the inner city than any other group, the Separation Wives turned to violence. This chapter has investigated the ways in which the Rising itself prompted these responses through the denial of political representation and the destruction of the city. The following chapter examines the deeply entrenched social and economic conditions in Dublin that created these women and that impelled them to react as they did.

[96] Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War*, 47.

Chapter 3 – Dublin's Separation Wives

> "The vast majority of the Irish people were opposed to us, our methods used in the attempt to obtain freedom. Two possible reasons may be advanced for this attitude of the public – the fact that due to John Redmond and his party encouraging recruiting for His Majesty's Forces, most of them had kith or kin in, or connected with the British Forces. Secondly, the tone of the Irish newspapers almost without exception, which not only condemned in the strongest possible language, the Insurrection, but actually clamoured for the execution of all our leaders."[97] -Robert Holland, Dublin Volunteer, Fourth Brigade

In his 1948 statement to the Bureau of Military History, Robert Holland, a former Irish Volunteer who had been stationed in the Marrowbone Lane district during the Rising, postulated two different theories that might explain the vitriol expressed by many Dubliners during and after the events of Easter week 1916. His first theory directly addresses the separation wives and their families, who Holland believed were emotionally distraught in the aftermath of the Rising because of their connections to the British Army. His second theory constructs Dubliners' negative reactions to the Rebellion as a function of the universally derisive journalistic treatment of the event. The citizens who hurled angry remarks at the defeated nationalists were fueled, in Holland's interpretation, by a potent mixture of propagandistic reporting and familial attachment to members of the British Army. The emotionally motivated responses Holland described must certainly have been contributing factors to the separation wives' discontent. Yet, both his theories are problematic because they negate any possibility that the members of the crowd were, through their actions, engaging in a deliberate process of criticism. If Holland's reasoning is accepted, the separation wives and their ilk were not agents who were expressing a critique of the rebels' actions, but were instead merely British dependents who were manipulated into responding negatively.

---

[97] Robert Holland, BMH statement, 34-35.

Irish nationalists were not alone in their assumption that the women who reacted against the surrendered rebels were exclusively motivated by their ties to the British army. Monk Gibson, an Irish Protestant and devoted unionist who served with the British Army Service Corps in Dublin during the Rising, wrote, "The sympathies of all parts of Dublin, including the slums, were on our side. There were far too many Dubliners fighting with Irish regiments, in France and elsewhere, for the population to feel that this was the right moment to embarrass England."[98] Here, the disapproving crowd is characterized as more autonomous in its decision-making capacity than in Holland's discussion—the population has independently deduced the possible outcome of the Rising and therefore disapproves of it. Again though, the motivations of the separation wives, and any others who expressed their fervent disapproval of the nationalists' actions, can be summarized neatly via their 'sympathy' for the Irishmen fighting in the British Army. The lower-class Dubliners who reacted against the rebels were, in the minds of unionist sympathizers as well as their nationalist counterparts, concerned exclusively with the political and militaristic issues surrounding the Rising. The idea that the separation wives may have been more worried about the immediate circumstances of their own lives is not factored into these contemporary descriptions in any way.

Another common contemporary criticism of the separation wives centered on the looting that occurred throughout the week. Mrs. Hamilton Norway, wife of the Secretary for the Post Office, was staying downtown at the Royal Hibernian Hotel on Dawson Street when the fighting began, and so had a clear view of the events. Like Alfred Fannin, she wrote letters to various family members throughout the course of the week, recording the atrocities she witnessed. In her letter from the Friday of Easter week, Mrs. Norway spoke in great detail about the looting mob:

---

[98] Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War*, 45.

> "The mob were chiefly women and children, with a sprinkling of men. They swarmed in and out of the side door bearing huge consignments of bananas, the great bunches on the stalk, to which the children attached a cord and ran away dragging it along. Other boys had big orange boxes which they filled with tinned and bottled fruits. Women with their skirts held up received showers of apples and oranges and all kinds of fruit which were thrown from the upper windows by their pals…It was an amazing sight, and nothing daunted these people. Higher up at another shop we were told a woman was hanging out of a window dropping down loot to a friend, when she was shot through the head by a sniper, probably our man; the body dropped into the street and the mob cleared. In a few minutes a hand-cart appeared and gathered up the body, and instantly all the mob swarmed back to continue the joyful proceedings!"[99]

Mrs. Hamilton, like many who witnessed the widespread pillaging that occurred during the week, described the attitude of the lower-class women and children who were looting the shops as joyous and exuberant. Only moments after the death of a fellow looter, the crowd returned, unperturbed, to continue its greedy pillage of neighborhood businesses. In Norway's reading of the scene, there is no need, only want. The women and children who comprise the raucous mob showed no concern for their fellow citizens or even for their own well-being.

Fruit was a luxury good to most members of Dublin's working class—it was too exorbitantly priced to be a part of daily meals. Many accounts of the looting focus on this aspect of the mob's actions. An unknown witness to the Rising recorded his or her experiences during the week in an article titled "The Looters," which was published in a May 1916 issue of *Irish Life*. The unidentified writer was clearly a union sympathizer; he or she described the General Post Office as "the sinister menace of the Sinn Fein fortress."[100] In this observer's account of the pillaging, there is an undeniable gender disparity between female and male looters' patterns:

> "The looters were mostly young lads and women, although there was a sprinkling of men amongst them. It was curious to observe the different demeanour of the men and women looters. The men did their looting in a furtive, hang-dog way and cleared off the moment they had as much booty as they could carry. The women flaunted their spoil: they seemed

[99] Mrs. Hamilton Norway, *The Sinn Fein Rebellion As I Saw It* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1916).
[100] "The Looters" in "History of the Rebellion", *Irish Life* (May 1916): 1.

> to be totally without shame or any remnant of moral sense; to have thrown off the conventional trammels of civilization and to have relapsed in an instant into the savage state."[101]

The observer's description of the looting women as fundamentally immoral and almost animalistic aligns with Mrs. Hamilton's portrayal of looting women as heartless, callous, and extremely selfish in their desire to gather as many goods as possible. In this account, too, the writer is disapproving of the women's chosen goods, writing, "The shops which came in for the most attention were boot shops, drapery establishments, tobacconists and sweet shops, in which almost invariably the goods were temptingly displayed in the windows without any shutters or blinds. In very few cases was there any looting for food, and those only late in the week."[102] After witnessing the robbery of a drapery store called Bakers, the author says, "I do not think there was a single one of the tenement houses in the crescent facing St. George's Church which was not stuffed full of Baker's goods. I doubt if the women in those houses ever worked so hard before in their lives."[103] These comments about the nature of the looting and the looters are rife with gender and class descriptors. The author was quick to point out that women were more prone to shamelessness and to immorality, and that many of those looting lived in the tenements near the stores. The author was disgusted with the ways in which these women showed off their findings, and he or she felt certain that the goods that were being taken were luxury items that the tenement dwellers did not need. Stealing food might not be wholly morally repugnant, but taking unnecessary curtains is unforgiveable.

As in the contemporary accounts written by unionist and nationalist participants in the Rising, no external events or circumstances come into play in either of these characterizations of the looting. The looters are portrayed as greedily taking advantage of the storeowners' absences,

---

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid, 2.

just as the attackers are framed as too ensconced in their husbands' experiences in the British Army to express any concern for their own situations. In all instances, there is a refusal to see from the point of view of the women themselves. Their actions are described in ways which suit the particular political end each writer is trying to convey—opposition to the Rising is merely another manipulation on the part of the British, and looting is yet another demonstration that Dublin's tenement dwellers, and particularly its lowest-class women, are morally bankrupt. Because no surviving accounts written by the separation women themselves exist, the historical record has tended to view them through the same lens as their contemporaries did. As such, the context of a woman's decision to attack a British soldier or pillage a neighborhood store is lost. In early twentieth century Dublin, which had the highest death-rate in the United Kingdom and "the greatest number of single and double-room tenements in proportion to its population", merely surviving as a lower-class resident was a daily struggle.[104] Innumerable factors, including the basic structure of the city's workforce, the availability of work to women, access to basic resources and horrific living conditions complicated the lives of Dublin's poorest residents. In such a fragile system, disruption of any variety could cause irreversible consequences. Undeniably, the Easter Rising caused a major disturbance of everyday life to all Dubliners. However, the reactions of the city's most disadvantaged groups must be viewed and reinterpreted through the lens of those individuals' own daily experiences, instead of exclusively via the decontextualized observations of their wealthier peers.

It is important to note that the separation wives and their families were not the only Irish citizens who were unhappy with the Easter Rebellion. Although, in observers' statements from both sides of the conflict, descriptions of separation wives as the main source of discontent abound, in reality many groups were unhappy with the events. In particular, Irish soldiers serving

[104] *British Medical Journal* (1914): 1211.

oversees largely agreed with their wives and families that the Rising was a mistake. Private Christopher Fox, who was serving in the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, wrote home, "these Sinn Feiners are a lot of murders. The sooner Ireland gets rid of them the better."[105] Although there existed more widespread negative responses to the Rising, the specific circumstances of life as a single parent in Dublin with which the separation wives were faced makes their reactions particularly interesting. The experiences of Irish soldiers fighting alongside the British in World War I has been quite extensively explored—the experiences of their families at home in Dublin, who had no access to resources if deprived of the separation allowances their father's or husband's service allotted, have received significantly less attention.

Nearly every contemporary observer of the Easter Rising and its aftermath portrayed the separation wives as either emotionally manipulated as a result of their ties to the British Army, or as selfishly motivated by access to luxury goods during the conflict. The separation wives are thus always characterized as either having been taken advantage of, or conversely of taking advantage themselves. This chapter will argue that, in the extremely economically fraught environment of early twentieth century Dublin, any disruption of order could spell immediate disaster for the city's lowest-class residents. The Easter Rising introduced circumstances that were unsettling to every Dubliner, but a small deviation from daily patterns that may have been little more than any annoyance to the rich could be absolutely devastating to the poor. The separation women, as members of this most socioeconomically disadvantaged group, represented just one set of negative reactions to the Rising. Yet, although there were many adverse responses to the events of Easter week 1916, the separation wives faced a unique mixture of problems which, when considered, render their attacks on the defeated rebels particularly interesting and

[105] Padraig Yeates, *A City in Wartime: Dublin 1914-1918* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2011), 117.

worthy of analysis. Ultimately, the separation women's decisions to attack the surrendering nationalists demonstrates an active choice to subvert any personal political beliefs in order to ensure the basic survival of their families, and thereby fulfill the duties of their most important role—not as wives, but as mothers.

Social and Economic Deprivation in Dublin's Notorious Slums

> "In Dublin it is impossible for men and women of the working class to live like human beings. The conditions under which they live are more deadly than the trenches; out of every six children born, one dies. The one-roomed tenements of Dublin are a scandal to civilisation."[106] Irish author Patricia Lynch, Reporting from Dublin, May 1916

A. Structure of the Economy and Workforce

Life as a member of the lower classes in Dublin was a constant challenge on many different levels. The basic structure of the city's economy was a major roadblock to any Dubliner who sought to improve his or her socioeconomic status via employment. Dublin experienced large-scale population growth throughout the nineteenth century, particularly during and after the potato famine of the 1840s, which forced many rural Irish to seek work opportunities in the city. However, after the 1880s, population growth began to stagnate—between 1881 and 1911, the city's population increased by just 17 percent, a marked decline when compared to the previous twenty years.[107] Unlike Belfast or other equally large cities in England, Dublin did not develop as an industrial powerhouse during the final decades of the nineteenth century, but instead as a central location for administration and communication throughout the country.[108] During this period, men and women employed in skilled manufacturing jobs often lost their positions as a

[106] Patricia Lynch, "Scenes from the Rebellion" *The Women's Dreadnought* 13 (May 1916).
[107] John Lynch and Jo Campling, *A Tale of Three Cities: Comparative Studies in Working Class Life* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1998), 19.
[108] Ibid.

result of declining industrial output or technological innovation.[109] During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the total percentage of the workforce involved in manufacturing fell significantly, from 33 percent of male Dubliners in 1841 to just 20 percent in 1911.[110] This economic restructuring resulted in a system where the extremely limited number of well-paying middle and upper class management positions was hugely outpaced by the number of casual and unskilled jobs, which were increasingly the only option for many lower-class workers.

The rearrangement of the economy in Dublin during the latter half of the nineteenth century away from manufacturing caused a major shift in the job market, which ultimately forced many workers towards the poorly defined category of general labor. By 1911, the closure of many major factories in the city meant that up to a third of Dublin's male workers could be classified as general laborers.[111] However, this increase in the proportion of casual or unskilled workers was not matched by an increase in the number of general positions available, such as in laboring or transportation.[112] The disproportionately large number of unskilled and casual laborers suggests that, unlike in other cities in the United Kingdom where general labor grew in response to the needs of conventional trades, in Dublin this category of worker arose as a result of the lack of diverse industrial employment opportunities.[113] Casual jobs were extremely unreliable and often seasonal, meaning that a large percentage of the city's population was out of work for long stretches of the year. There was also an immense amount of competition for these low-paying positions. The restructured economy meant that, on the eve of the First World War, Dublin's workforce was forced to suffer low wages and long hours in cyclical jobs, the loss of

[109] Mary Daly, "Social Structure of the Dublin Working Class, 1871-1911" *Irish Historical Studies* 23 (1982): 122.
[110] Ibid, 121.
[111] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 200.
[112] Daly, "Social Structure", 122.
[113] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 200.

which could spell eviction for a worker's family.[114] The supply of unskilled workers in Dublin was significantly larger than the demand for their labor, which meant that managers saw little need to increase pay or decrease hours. The city's most economically disadvantaged workers were thus trapped in a system that necessitated long hours of physical work, was seasonal, unreliable, and offered very little compensation.

Another important feature of Dublin's economy during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century was the immobility of the workforce. Important social markers characterized different economic potential—for example, Protestants held a majority of high paying professional occupations, and were underrepresented in the working classes.[115] Mobility was limited throughout the economy, but was most circumscribed among lower-class workers.[116] Although some movement from manual to non-manual positions occurred, mobility of this type was experienced almost exclusively by members of the skilled working class, not by casual laborers.[117] Census data from 1911 indicates that 68.5 percent of unskilled workers had fathers who were also unskilled.[118] As a result of the decreasing number of manufacturing positions available, the most common form of mobility during this period was downward—in 1911, 22.8 percent of unskilled workers were the sons of skilled fathers.[119] These statistics demonstrate the affect on the lower classes of the restructured Dublin economy, confirming that, as a result of progressively limited occupational prospects, many workers were forced to drop into the category of general laborer.[120] The economic picture of Dublin in the early years of the twentieth century that emerges is one of constant hardship, as more and more workers vied for a shrinking

---

[114] Ibid.
[115] Daly, "Social Structure", 123.
[116] Ibid, 129.
[117] Ibid, 125.
[118] Ibid, 124.
[119] Ibid, 129.
[120] Ibid.

number of well-paying jobs. Members of the always-swelling percentage who were not successful were required to seek difficult, inconsistent and low-paying work, which left the worker as well as his or her family utterly dependent on the capriciousness of an increasingly unpredictable economic environment.

B. The Tenement System

The most visible social consequences of the instability of the Dublin economy were the city's notorious tenements. Although the city's slums had been criticized since the early decades of the nineteenth century, the influx of rural Irish to Dublin during the famine of the 1840s caused issues of overcrowding and deterioration in the poorer neighborhoods to intensify drastically. Some have argued that the failure of governmental agencies to address the issue of unsanitary housing conditions in the city was a result of the emphasis on agriculture throughout the nineteenth century.[121] About 90 percent of Ireland's population resided in rural environments during that period, and the two ideological strains that dominated political discussions, nationalism and Catholicism, were also both "firmly based in rural Ireland."[122] As a consequence, the issue of urban housing was slow to gain attention. This was problematic because, as Mary Daly notes in her study of the social structures of early twentieth century Dublin, "In all respects tenement dwellers emerge as the most deprived" segment of the city's population.[123] Census data from 1911 shows that the tenements were home to the lowest proportion of occupied men.[124] 72 percent of tenement dwellers belonged to the unskilled class of workers, and women headed nearly 31 percent of tenement households, the highest proportion

[121] Ruth McManus, "Blue Collars, Red Forts, and Green Fields: Working-Class Housing in Ireland in the Twentieth Century", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 64 (2003): 38.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Daly, "Social Structures", 131.
[124] Ibid.

anywhere in the city.[125] At least one adult was illiterate in more than 29 percent of tenement families.[126] As a result of chronic overpopulation, building corrosion and notoriously poor sanitation, malnutrition and illness were commonplace.[127] The deterioration and overcrowding of Dublin's tenements, where the city's most socioeconomically disadvantaged residents had no choice but to reside, created a dangerous and sometimes even fatal environment from which poor Dublin families could not hope to escape.

Two distinct but overlapping demographic trends led to the horrifying conditions of overcrowding in the tenement residences of Dublin. During the second half of the nineteenth century, wealthy Dubliners moved out of the city center into fashionable suburbs, leaving behind their enormous Georgian estates. At the same time, immigrants from the countryside poured into the city in search of work in the aftermath of the famine. The Dublin Housing Corporation, which was responsible for overseeing housing construction and maintenance in the city, forwent the financial burden of building new structures, and instead turned to the huge Georgian homes, which sat empty throughout downtown.[128] The two- and three-story homes, which had been built at the turn of the nineteenth century to house individual families, were divided by floor and room into several different apartments. The result was unmanageable, chronic overcrowding, which often found 40 individuals living in a single building, and families of more than eight sharing the space of one small room.

In both 1913 and 1914, the British Medical Journal included reports on the conditions of overcrowding in Dublin's tenements in their yearly publication. In 1913, the journal reported,

---

[125] Ibid.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Kenneth Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1994), 12.
[128] Lynch, *A Tale of Three Cities*, 128.

"There are 20,000 families in Dublin who occupy single-room tenements."[129] The article concluded that despite the atrocious condition of the tenements, any attempt to replace them would be entirely infeasible, because "under present conditions it would take about fifty years and cost over £4,000,000 to obliterate the tenement houses and substitute for them self-contained sanitary houses." In the following year's report, the journal found that "Forty-two percent, (130,000) of the inhabitants of Dublin live in tenements of one and two rooms", and concluded that "Many of these 130,000 people live in dwellings which are registered by the Corporation as being 'unfit for human habitation.'"[130] As a consequence of the seemingly insurmountable overpopulation of the slums, Dublin had the greatest overcrowding of any city in the United Kingdom, and the highest death rate.[131] In London, the death rate was 15.6 per thousand—in Dublin it was 22.3.[132] In these one-room homes, members of Dublin's most socioeconomically disadvantaged class had to conduct all the affairs of daily life, including "cooking, eating, bathing, dressing, sleeping, relaxing," and any other activities that might occur in the home.[133] Kenneth Kearns writes that within the small space of the tenement apartment, "The whole cycle of life from births to weddings to wakes was played out."[134] Some historians have argued that although the overcrowding in tenements was challenging, the closeness of the community and shared hardships created a sense of camaraderie among the city's slum dwellers. Padraig Yeates argues that in fact, these benefits "have been much exaggerated", and that in reality living in these communities left already vulnerable tenants prey to "theft, threats and abuse" from hostile

[129] *British Medical Journal* (1913): 829.
[130] *British Medical Journal* (1914): 1211.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Terry Fagan, *Dublin Tenements: The True Story of Dublin's Notorious Housing As Told by the People Who Lived There* (Dublin: North Inner City Folklore Project, 2013), 14.
[133] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 27.
[134] Ibid.

neighbors.[135] The families of unskilled workers, who often had no choice but to live in the perilously overcrowded tenement structures, were deprived of any privacy, and their homes offered them little protection from the world. In some cases, to be inside a tenement was actually significantly more dangerous than to be outside. When unparalleled overpopulation combined with extensive building deterioration, the tenement structures themselves could become death traps for their residents.

On September 2, 1913, in the midst of the Dublin Lockout, a tenement structure at numbers 66 and 67 Church Street collapsed without any warning, trapping and killing the seven people inside.[136] Three of those killed were children, and many more individuals were injured as a result of the collapse.[137] The revelation that some tenement structures were so fragile that they could fall into total ruin at any moment prompted the Dublin Housing Corporation to begin a thorough inquiry into the tenement system in the city.[138] The resulting "Report of the Departmental Committee of Inquiry into the Housing of the Dublin Working Classes" was shocking to those who read it. In an editorial published in the *Irish Times* in February 1914 about the report, the authors write that this was a document "of almost historic importance…We cannot suppose that there is in existence a more startling or arresting Blue Book."[139] The report found that within the 5,322 tenement structures in the city there were 32,851 occupied rooms and 1,560 occupied cellars.[140] The account concluded based on these figures that 78 percent of tenement homes consisted of "one room lettings."[141]

---

[135] Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, 302.
[136] Fagan, *Dublin Tenements*, 184.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.
[139] *Irish Times*, 18 February 1914.
[140] "Report of the Departmental Committee of Inquiry into the Housing of the Dublin Working Classes", The Dublin Corporation (1913): 3.
[141] Ibid.

The authors of the report visited many homes throughout the city, and wrote that sanitary conditions were so vile that "it is no uncommon thing to find halls and landings, yards and closets of the houses in a filthy condition, and in nearly every case human excreta is to be found scattered about the yards and on the floors of the closets and in some cases even in the passages of the house itself."[142] The inquiry found that nearly a fifth of Dublin's tenements had only one toilet for every twenty to forty people.[143] Maintaining a sanitary environment was a constant struggle for women who lived in these dilapidated structures. The deterioration of the buildings and the landlord's unwillingness to complete any form of upkeep meant that, by 1900, the once grand 100 to 150 year-old Georgian homes had fallen into total disrepair.[144] The building usually suffered from some combination of "corroded brickwork, leaky roofs, sagging ceilings, rotting floor-boards and woodwork, cracked walls, crumbling fireplaces, broken windows, rickety staircases—general decay within and without."[145] Fires were common in the deteriorated buildings, and generations of improper repair meant that the walls of these houses were home to constant infestations of insects.[146] Families occasionally reported finding "rats as big as cats" living in the buildings' rooting floors.[147]

Tenement homes were clearly not fit for human habitation, but residents were unable to make any demands to their landlords about the conditions of their apartments. There was very little restriction on the landlord's power to evict tenants without warning or for missing a payment by even a few days.[148] Landlords could also increase rents at their own discretion. In 1900, over 600 Dublin landlords admitted that they had raised the rents on their properties by an

---

[142] Ibid, 5.
[143] Fagan, *Dublin Tenements*, 9.
[144] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 9.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid 9, 13.
[147] Ibid 13.
[148] Ibid, 10.

average of 22 percent during the previous twenty years.[149] The landlords were subject to very little oversight, as the Dublin Corporation, which was ostensibly responsible for ensuring the safety of these residences, employed just 30 inspectors to look after more than 32,000 buildings.[150] Tenement homes were extremely hazardous, but the unskilled laborers and their families who lived in them had virtually no recourse to improve their situations. They could not rely on their landlords for support, and the governmental agencies designed to help them seemed largely unconcerned with their plight. The immobility of the city's economy meant that few who lived in Dublin's overcrowded and deteriorating tenements ever had the opportunity to escape.

In the *Irish Times* editorial responding to the Dublin Corporation's report on the housing conditions of the working class in the city, the writers expressed their outrage at the way in which these members of their society were forced to live:

> "We knew that Dublin has a far larger percentage of single-room tenements than any other city in the Kingdom. We did not know that nearly twenty-eight thousand of our fellow-citizens live in dwellings which even the Corporation admits to be unfit for human habitation. We had suspected the difficulty of decent living in the slums; this report proves the impossibility of it. Nearly a third of our population so live that from dawn to dark and from dark to dawn it is without cleanliness, privacy or self-respect. The sanitary conditions are revolting; even the ordinary standards of savage morality can hardly be maintained."[151]

It was widely known that Dublin's tenements suffered from massive overcrowding. Yet, the authors of this editorial reveal the extent to which many middle- and upper-class Dubliners were unaware of the true 'impossibility' of life in the city's slums. Although the slums constituted a permanent and unchanging facet of the landscape of the city, many wealthier residents rarely came into contact with them or their residents. What emerges from the report is "a picture hardly

[149] Lynch, *A Tale of Three Cities*, 128.
[150] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 13.
[151] *Irish Times*, 18 February 1914.

less lurid than the scenes of Dante's Inferno."[152] Like access to work, the tenements represented another challenge to the basic processes of daily life that Dublin's poorest citizens faced every day. For the general laborers who were forced to make their homes in these spaces, any small disruption in income could result on the loss of shelter for one's family. The Easter Rising, which prevented most of Dublin from working for a full week, was a total interruption to daily life. While business owners like Alfred Fannin and wives of governmental officials like Mrs. Hamilton Norway were extremely inconvenienced by the Rebellion, as upper-class citizens, neither their homes nor their livelihoods were seriously threatened. For tenement families, the Rising was a major trauma to both. Laborers were unable to work, already tenuous tenement structures were usually in the nearest vicinity to the violence, and working-class Dubliners were more likely than any other group to become the victims of wayward bullets.

C. Children's Schooling and Employment

One means through which tenement residents might have hoped to escape the cycle of poverty into which they were born was through education. National schools were established throughout Ireland in the nineteenth century to provide education to students across the economic spectrum. These institutions proved to be substandard, not merely in terms of the education they provided, but also in relation to the services they made available to their students. For example, in a 1906 report, Dr. D. E. Flinn, medical inspector of the Local Government Board for Dublin, noted that, of the 167 national schools in the city, 104 lacked any lavatory facilities.[153] The schools also failed to provide their students with foodstuffs of any variety, so students were obligated either to bring what scraps their mothers could scrounge up, or go

[152] Ibid.
[153] O'Brien, Dear Dirty Dublin, 177.

through the day without any nourishment.[154] Teachers complained that students were sometimes too physically strained to participate, and the *Irish Times* reported that in some instances, compulsory education seemed closer to "legislative murder."[155]

The school system's inability to provide necessary services to its students was ultimately a lesser problem than the draw of work. Education as a path to upward mobility was severely limited by the need, within tenement families, for children to begin making money as soon as was possible.[156] Mary Daly writes, "The need to supplement family income by begging, selling newspapers or other sources of casual employment militated against school attendance, and this was particularly so after children reached ten years of age."[157] Working-class children were significantly more likely to drop out of school to pursue work than were their middle-class counterparts. In 1912, there were 44,048 boys enrolled in third standard classes but just 36,596 in forth, with an even steeper decline in the higher standards.[158] By the time a boy reached his teenage years, his obligation to help provide for his family outweighed his perceived need for more education.

In 1914, the Catholic Working Boys' Technical Aid Association Committee published a pamphlet entitled *The Blind Alley*, which sought to expose and hopefully help solve the issues of inadequate education among lower-class students. The author of the document begins forcefully by symbolically attaching childhood educational achievement with adult moral wellbeing:

> "There exist in Ireland certain forms of unprogressive employment engaging large numbers of Juvenile Workers…conducted under conditions which have no regard for the future of these youthful workers and are in many cases positively injurious to their

[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Daly, "Social Structure", 126.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.

> material and moral well being. These employments offer in themselves no opportunity for the workers of earning a living wage on reaching manhood or womanhood."[159]

The pamphlet's author is concerned that these young people, upon dropping out of school, will fall into the same patterns of vice in which their parents presumably engaged. The author also writes that, even if working class students did remain in school, "the Elementary Education…will be found in many cases to be so low that they can profit little by any Technical Instruction…This was especially the case in Mathematics. Their deficiency was instanced in the case of English by their inability to take notes of the lectures."[160] In all aspects of education, therefore, lower class students were behind. These students' ability to attain manufacturing or even non-manual jobs later in life was extremely limited by their basic educational deficiencies. For the author of *The Blind Alley*, lacking education was a surefire way not only to limit one's own economic and social prospects, but also to contribute to the cycle of poverty:

> "These juvenile workers cannot, if allowed to remain relatively uneducated, adequately exercise in the future with prudence or good effect their rights or functions as citizens in the control of their local affairs or private interests. They reach adult age in many cases broken in health, discontented, often to join the ranks of the unemployed, to rear in penury a family as, or more, thriftless and uneconomic than themselves, to contribute to the calendar of crime, the numbers in the poor-house, the hospitals, or the sanatoria, or in receipt of charity. Thus many of these boys grow to citizenship more a burden than a benefit to themselves or the State."[161]

Education was therefore viewed as essential not only because it allowed an individual person or family to move away from the tenements, but also because it gave them the opportunity to become, in the language of *The Blind Alley*, a benefit to Ireland. Advocacy groups such as the Catholic Working Boys' Technical Aid Association Committee were eventually successful at creating child labor laws that limited young children's ability to work during school hours. After

---

[159] Catholic Working Boys' Technical Aid Association Committee, *The Blind Alley: Some Aspects of Juvenile Employment in Ireland with Proposals for the Betterment of the Condition of the Same* (Dublin: Educational Co, 1915).
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.

1 August 1915, a child had to be at least fourteen years old in order to trade legally on the street, and his or her license could be revoked if he or she were found to be working during school hours.[162] This did not limit other forms of employment, however, and children from poorer neighborhoods continued to forgo education in order to help sustain their often-large families. Although educational attainment occasionally led to improved socioeconomic circumstances for disadvantaged young Dubliners, the schools' inability to provide necessary resources combined with the students' urgent need to support their families to create a system whereby such improvement was rarely achieved.

D. Religion and Family Demographics

Certain demographic patterns are clearly visible when studying the structure of Dublin's workforce in the years immediately preceding and during the First World War. Tenement dwellers were significantly more likely to be catholic than protestant, and were also more likely to be native-born Dubliners than immigrants from Ireland's rural regions.[163] Catholic Dubliners often had more children than did their Protestant counterparts. According to data from the 1911 census, among couples who had been married for 20 to 29 years, Catholics had 6.63 children on average, while non-Catholic couples had an average of 5.15 children.[164] While this trend is significant, an even more striking differential arises between different socioeconomic groups. While the families of unskilled laborers included an average of 7.69 children, professional families averaged just 3.76 children.[165] Dublin families were also larger than migrant families,

[162] Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, 261.
[163] Daly, "Social Structure", 132.
[164] Mary Daly, "Marriage, Fertility and Women's Lives in Twentieth-Century Ireland (C. 1900-C. 1970)", *Women's History Review* 15 (2006): 573.
[165] Ibid.

who had an average of 5.89 children.[166] The significance of these statistics is that tenement-dwelling families, which had the fewest resources and the smallest homes, also had the highest number of children. As a result of the illness and chronic malnutrition in slums communities, the infant mortality rate was much higher in these areas. In the 1920s, the rate was 116 deaths per thousand births—more than five times greater than the rate for children born to wealthier families in the suburbs.[167] Children under one year comprised about 20 percent of the total number of deaths that occurred in the inner city.[168] Tenements, which were home to the city's largest families, were toxic to their youngest residents, whose immune systems could not cope with the insanitary conditions.

In the introduction to his 1918 book *Dublin Types*, Sidney Davies spoke extensively about the importance of the Catholic Church to residents of Dublin's tenement communities:

> "In speaking of slum life in Dublin, it would of course be absurd not to mention the influence which more than any other keeps alive in the hearts of the poor the spirit of hope—the Catholic Church. I suppose in few cities in the whole world is the majority of the population as poor, and at the same time as devout, as it is in Dublin. Chapels in the more congested districts in the heart of the city are thronged with humble people who find consolation there for all the agonies of daily life. Their religion is ever present with them."[169]

While Davies' characterization might verge towards the extreme, religion was unquestionably an exceptionally important factor in the lives of Dublin's poorest residents. Family size in particular was intimately connected with religious practice in Ireland during the early twentieth century. In contrast to many other countries throughout Europe, high levels of marital fertility became the norm in Ireland during this period.[170] While high birth rates may in some cases have been the

---

[166] Daly, "Social Structure", 132.
[167] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 14.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Sidney Davies, *Dublin Types* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1918), 10.
[170] Tom Inglis, "Origins and Legacies of Irish Prudery: Sexuality and Social Control in Modern Ireland", *Éire-Ireland* 40 (2005): 17.

result of restricted access to information concerning birth control, they were more likely a response to the persistent perception of a large family as ideal.[171] The Catholic Church in Ireland continued to promote a large family as desirable, and many Irish women strove to adhere to the image of the ideal mother as presented by their religious leaders.[172] Although the Church played an important role in the life of every variety of tenement resident in the city, it was particularly important to women, who relied it on as a source of support.[173] While the Church could often provide comfort to tenement women, it also presented problems, particularly in relation to family planning and premarital sex.

In Dublin's tenement communities of the early twentieth century, premarital pregnancy "was regarded as high scandal and a moral blight upon the girl's family."[174] The Church offered little support to women who became pregnant outside the confines of marriage, and girls sometimes resorted to extreme actions as a result of the shame of their pregnancies. May Hanaphy was born in the North Dublin tenements around 1908, and was interviewed by Kenneth Kearns as part of his project to record oral testimony about life in the tenements during the early decades of the 1900s. Hanaphy recalls, as a child, knowing girls who "drowned themselves. Out of despair. And the Church had no sympathy in those days. Oh, many a girl took her own life."[175] The Church also heavily regulated sex within marriage. Women who lived in tenement communities were often desperate to limit the number of children they had to feed and clothe, but to deny a husband's sexual advances was, in the eyes of the Catholic Church, a sin.[176] Women were also required to go through a process referred to as 'churching' after they had

[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid, 18.
[173] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 43-44.
[174] Ibid, 45.
[175] Ibid, 46.
[176] Ibid, 44-45.

given birth. Kearns explains that this process involved "going to the church, kneeling before the priest with a candle, and being blessed. The belief was that sexual intercourse had tarnished a woman's purity in the eyes of God…Until a mother was redeemed through churching she was not allowed to…prepare food for the family in any manner, as there might be some sort of contamination."[177] Women who lived in the Dublin tenements had a complex relationship with religion. While in many ways it offered comfort and support, it also defined the ideals that women ought to strive to attain. The ideal Irish Catholic woman should be chaste, but should also prioritize her family above all else. Within tenement communities, which had the highest percentage of female-headed families—particularly during the war—the importance of motherhood in women's lives could not be overstated.

E. Motherhood

Mothers played an essential, irreplaceable role within the family structure in Dublin's lower-class communities. Although women were less likely to work outside of the home then men, their familial responsibilities were extensive. Kenneth Kearns provides a extended list of the many duties required of every tenement wife—"A mother was expected to care for the children, prepare meals, do the shopping, wash, clean, iron, budget the money, go to the pawn, deal with the reliving officer and the St Vincent de Paul men, and settle family disputes."[178] Many women shouldered all of these responsibilities in addition to daytime jobs. Motherhood was an essential dictate of the Catholic Church, and was important throughout Ireland during the early decades of the twentieth century. However, the particular hardships of tenement life made motherhood within these communities both especially crucial and especially challenging.

[177] Ibid, 48.
[178] Ibid, 49.

Women were even less able to secure reliable employment in Dublin's unsteady economy than were men, and the jobs they could find often involved excruciatingly long hours working either as domestic servants or as street traders. Women's work within the home was an essential component of the informal economy, and during this period housework was increasingly viewed as a major barometer of a wife or mother's value.[179] Although her formal work outside of the home and informal work within were extremely important components of a tenement mother's role, her principal responsibility was securing shelter, food and clothing for her children.[180] Within tenement communities, resources were almost always difficult to come by, so the ability to create innovative strategies to fulfill her family's needs was the single most critical skill a socioeconomically disadvantaged Dublin woman could cultivate.

As a result of the rapidly changing, unstable nature of Dublin's economy in the years before and during the First World War, securing a reliable job was difficult for any low-class citizen. For women, that challenge was even greater. The 1911 census revealed that of the approximately 100,000 male Dubliners who fell within the productive age groups, 92,000 listed themselves as having some form of employment.[181] Of the 63,000 unmarried females in the same category, only 40,000, or 64 percent, were in any way employed.[182] If married women were included, the gap between male and female employment percentages would have been even more significant. This major discrepancy underscores the "massive unemployment and lack of opportunity" women of all age and economic groups were forced to contend with during this

[179] Maria Luddy, "Women and Work in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ireland: An Overview", in *Women and Paid Work in Ireland, 1500-1930*, ed. Bernadette Whelan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 55. Joanna Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 266.
[180] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 32.
[181] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 199-200.
[182] Ibid.

period.[183] The inability to secure employment forced many women who would otherwise have been eager participants in the formal economy "to live in a state of involuntary indolence."[184]

As Dublin's economy struggled to stay afloat in the face of declining industrial prowess during the latter half of the nineteenth century, another, perhaps more subtle change was occurring. Joanna Bourke argues that during this period, women's employment opportunities dwindled significantly, and female work was transferred almost exclusively to the domestic realm.[185] Between 1900 and 1914 this process accelerated, and by the start of the war, "Economic opportunities for unmarried women collapsed", as married women became "increasingly dependent" on their husbands' incomes.[186] Women's inability to secure employment outside the home meant that their roles within the domestic sphere were prioritized. A wife's housework became a crucial measure of her value within the family. Accusations of domestic violence by husbands could be combatted if a husband in turn accused his wife of poor housework.[187] Within the courts, legal officials stated that a wife who was a poor cook or housekeeper should not be surprised if her husband abandoned her.[188] As a result of the shifting locus of women's economic work into the home, domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, and raising children became a crucial component of an Irish mother's duties during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Despite the increasingly limited employment opportunities for women, many tenement mothers did engage in paid work of some variety. Working as a domestic servant in the home of a wealthier Dublin family was one option available to women. In 1911, 98 percent of upper class

---

[183] Ibid, 200.
[184] Ibid, 201.
[185] Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, 263.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid, 266.
[188] Ibid, 267.

and 71 percent of middle-class homes in Dublin employed at least one domestic servant.[189] Although Protestants composed just 25 percent of the city's total population in 1911, they were significantly more likely to employ servants than were Catholics.[190] Domestic work was undertaken primarily by women—93 percent of servants were female according to the 1911 census.[191] However, these positions were largely restricted to young, unmarried women, as 47 percent were under 25 years of age, and just 8 percent were currently married or had been widowed.[192] Married women and mothers could occasionally find work in small factories, although, as Bourke indicates, those positions were disappearing rapidly during this period.[193] Tenement mothers might also seek work as "washerwomen, charwomen, tuggers, sewing, and street traders."[194] Female street traders might sell fish, flowers, or, as was especially common in tenement communities, used clothing.[195] While casual male employment was entirely dependent on the demand for dock or transportation labor, unstructured women's work, such as washing and trading, was somewhat less sporadic. Thus, even in tenement families with male heads-of-household, women were often the only source of income.[196] Women who could not secure any form of employment were still responsible for their families' wellbeing, and within the poorest tenement communities, survival tactics such as begging were indispensible.[197]

In the tenements of Dublin in the early twentieth century, a mother's single most important responsibility was to provide shelter, food and clothing to her children.[198] The housing

---

[189] Mona Hearne, *Below Stairs: Domestic Service Remembered in Dublin and Beyond, 1880-1922* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993): 7.
[190] Ibid, 8.
[191] Ibid, 11.
[192] Ibid, 13, 14.
[193] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 30.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Luddy, "Women and Work", 55.
[198] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 32.

conditions in the slums were notoriously unhygienic, and though mothers struggled to provide the cleanest and safest environments possible for their children, there was usually little they could do to improve sanitation.[199] Second-hand clothing was readily available either from street traders or from vendors at the weekly market, although the most disadvantaged women had to rely on various charity groups in order to supply clothing for their children. Providing nourishing food to their offspring was a constant struggle for tenement mothers. Slum families had a diet that consisted primarily of bread and tea. Oatmeal, potatoes, and occasional pieces of inexpensive or near-rotting meat might also be included in daily meals.[200] The infrequency, limited portions, and repetitive ingredients meant that these meals often provided "little real nourishment and were sometimes barely sufficient to maintain life itself".[201] Real hunger was common in the tenements, and the food that mothers could afford was often insufficient to ensure the full health of their children.[202]

Women's survival strategies were often the only means through which their families could have food of any variety. Stealing and begging were last-ditch attempts on the part of tenement mothers to avoid starvation and eviction. Motherhood was viewed across all strata of Dublin society as the most essential element of a woman's life. During the early decades of the twentieth century, as structured employment opportunities for women began to rapidly disappear, domestic work, and motherhood in particular, garnered even more importance. Within Dublin's poorest tenement communities, a mother's duty to provide a safe and nourishing environment to her children was exceptionally difficult to fulfill. Life in the Dublin slums during the period before and during World War I involved a continuous struggle just to provide basic

[199] Ibid, 13.
[200] McManus, "Blue Collars", 39. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 13-14.
[201] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 13-14.
[202] Ibid, 32.

necessities. Women's lives were wholly engulfed by their need to keep their families safe from the always-imminent threat of total, irreversible social and economic destitution.

The Separation Wives: An Exceptional Case

James Connolly provocatively labeled British enlistment tactics in Ireland "economic conscription."[203] Connolly was an advanced nationalist and for him, as well as for others who shared his cause, bullying enlistment programs and the threat of conscription from British officials provided rallying points around which most Irish men and women could agree. Connolly directly engaged with the importance of the separation allowances in his statement, writing that the men "who should revolt against what they are doing" must continue to fight under the banner of a country they despised in order "that those dear to them might not starve."[204] The socialist newspaper Connolly edited, *Workers' Republic*, bemoaned the common practice among employers of firing men of military age.[205] While Connolly and other advanced nationalists may have overstated the extent to which Dublin employers were complicit in British tactics to increase Ireland's enlistment numbers, there is evidence that government officials attempted to encourage business owners to fire their employees. On November 13 1915, the Department of Recruiting for Ireland sent a circular letter to loyalist employers:

> "You will understand the present situation better than the men themselves, and a few words from you will carry great weight. Will you speak to them and make it clear that this is no ordinary war but a fight by the Allies for their very existence, and so help them to realize how vital it is that a far larger number of recruits should be forthcoming?" [206]

---

[203] Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War*, 19.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Moriarty, "Work, Warfare and Wages", 75-76.
[206] Peter Murray, "The First World War and a Dublin Distillery Worforce: Recruting and Redundancy at John Power & Son, 1915-1917", *Saothar, Journal of the Irish Labor History Society* 15 (1990): 48-49.

Employers were further asked "to make it as easy as you can for them to go – and to return – by assuring them that their positions will be kept for them."[207] Although the language of this letter does not specifically order managers to fire workers so that they might join the Army, that employers were expected to do so is unquestionable. The Department also asked that employers be sure to provide their workers with information about separation allowances.[208] At a November 23 meeting of the Employers of Labor in Dublin, a resolution was adopted which pledged the employers present to active cooperation with enlistment programs.[209] A second resolution urged managers to replace men leaving for the service "as far as possible by men over or under recruitable age or by women."[210] By encouraging employers to hire those ineligible for enlistment, British recruitment officials added another challenge to the already arduous task of securing stable employment in Dublin. Although men were not explicitly conscripted into the British forces in the years before the Rising, the increased difficulty of finding work during the war made the army the only remaining paid employment option for many Dublin husbands and fathers.

Economic conscription as described by Connolly might have constituted the most forceful 'push' factor for Dubliners to join the British armed forces, but separation allowances could also function as a strong 'pull' factor.[211] As a result of chronic high rates of unemployment and low wages among the city's unskilled working class, the reliability of army stipends was a desirable feature, particularly for men who had families to support.[212] For many unskilled workers, the benefits of joining up were substantial—James English, who worked as a laborer in

---

[207] Ibid, 49.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid, 51.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, 48.
[212] Ibid.

Wexford, calculated that his family would be "154 percent better off once he was soldiering."[213] The separation allowance of 12 shillings 6 pennies weekly was "a powerful inducement" to sign up, particularly for poorer Dublin men, who were even less able to retain employment during the War than under the city's customarily unreliable economic conditions.[214]

No definitive statistic about the total number of Dublin women receiving separation allowances during World War I exists, but historians generally agree that "it must have been significant."[215] In one Dublin Corporation survey conducted in the north inner-city tenements during the war years, separation women were second only to laborers when classified according to source of income.[216] 3,476 laborers were counted, compared to 1,705 separation wives.[217] Thus, in this tenement community, separation women were heads of household in a third of all families. Also, the number of separation wives living within just one depressed neighborhood was greater than the total number of nationalists who participated in the Easter Rising. The contrast between the number of active participants and the number of uninvolved Dubliners demonstrates the extent to which certain narratives of the Rising have been prioritized above others. While the manifestos and pamphlets distributed by educated leaders of the nationalist movements have been analyzed again and again, the daily experiences of separation families have provoked comparatively little inquiry.

During the war, the cost of living spiked drastically throughout Ireland. Food prices were among the first to increase. Between August and October 1914, the cost of a loaf of bread rose by a halfpenny.[218] Concerns about the lack of resources spread quickly and some groups, such as

---

[213] Jeffrey, *Ireland and the Great War*, 19.
[214] O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin*, 254.
[215] Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, 281.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Moriarty, "Work, Warfare and Wages", 76.

the Irish Trade Union Congress, used language that evoked memories of the famine in order to critique continually rising prices.[219] Hunger was a persistent problem during the war years, and even with separation allowances, women often struggled to purchase food at higher prices. In an interview with the *Irish Independent* in March of 1916, Miss Gargan, a probation officer with the Juvenile Court, stated, "army separation allowances, with the utmost economy, are barely sufficient to provide a family with food—and nothing can be allowed for clothing."[220] Although separation payments offered women a larger amount per week than had their husbands' jobs, the reality of wartime inflation decreased the real purchasing power of that money. Tenement mothers continued to struggle to fulfill their families' basic needs, even with British separation allowances.

Many in Dublin felt strongly that the separation payments were problematic. Some Irish nationalists condemned the distribution of allowances as a British scheme to corrupt Irish womanhood by cultivating an even greater dependency on the government within the working class.[221] Others were concerned that women might use the money on something other than supporting their children. Middle- and upper-class Dubliners were deeply suspicious about the moral qualities of slum dwellers, and the perception that tenement wives were using the allowances to drink rather than to help their families "crossed the political spectrum."[222] Public opinion was even further enraged when the British government decided, in 1916, to allow unmarried mothers to collect payments.[223] It became crucial to upper-class members of Dublin society that some measure for oversight was established in order to curtail what they perceived as the morally abhorrent behaviors of slum women. Consequently, the Matron's Association of

[219] Ibid.
[220] Yeates, A City in Wartime, 170.
[221] Ibid, 302.
[222] Ibid, 282.
[223] Ibid.

Dublin appointed inspectors to monitor the separation women.[224] These inspections were crucial, because, as Yeates summarizes, "they served the dual purpose of reassuring men at the front that their wives were being morally policed and saving the exchequer money by not supporting 'fallen' women."[225] Though there was little evidence to support the claim that separation allowances were being wasted away on drink and immorality, inspections required tenement wives abide by a certain set of ethical and behavioral guidelines dictated by members of the city's educated upper classes. The women who were so insistent on overseeing the activities of the separation wives often came from the same economic stratums as the women who joined advanced nationalists groups such as Cumann na mBan. These politically involved, middle-class women were in no way subject to the same oversight as their working-class peers.[226] The women's institutions were focused exclusively on policing the activities of tenement families.[227] Thus, the process by which separation allowances were distributed tended to reinforce Dubliners' preconceived assumptions about the relationship between class and morality.

Despite both the minimized purchasing power of allowances and middle-class Dubliners' concerns about the moral implications of the payments, many separation wives were able to provide better homes to their children during the war then they had ever been able to previously. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children released yearly reports on the instances of child abuse in Dublin. In the report for the year April 1917 to March 1918, the society attributed the drastic reduction in child cruelty cases to "uniformly more employment and better wages".[228] The author continues:

---

[224] Ibid, 139.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid, 302.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid, 260.

> "The bulk of the cases under investigation this year relate chiefly to the families of soldiers and sailors on active service. Most of these families are better off financially than they have ever been, and consequently the homes are better provided with food and clothing that during normal conditions in times of peace when there were no separation funds or allowances available."[229]

The implication of the report is clear—separation stipends allow mothers to take better care of their families then do normal economic conditions in Dublin. Women were entirely responsible for budgeting their monetary resources, and they were able to do so in a way that provided the best possible home, food, and clothing to their children. Life in Dublin's notorious tenements during the early years of the twentieth century was never easy, but army separation allowances helped to ease the burden placed on wives and mothers in these communities.

The Easter Rising was a frenzied event, which threw the city and all of its residents into a state of chaos. Resources were extremely limited during the course of the week and for several days afterwards. The Society of St Vincent de Paul provided some relief to the city's poorest residents, but it could not meet the overwhelming demand.[230] Bakeries allowed each family to purchase just one loaf of bread per day, which was often all they could afford without wages or separation allowances.[231] May Hanaphy, one of Kevin Kearns's interview subjects, was a young girl living with her mother and several siblings in a north inner city tenement during the Rising. In her oral testimony, she spoke about the lack of resources and resultant looting which she witnessed from the window of her family's apartment:

[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid, 119.
[231] Ibid.

> "Now, Ma wouldn't allow us outside…when the trouble started…People were getting trampled on when they were looting, taking things out of the shops…See, we were curtailed for food during the Rebellion and there was nothing coming to anybody. They smashed everything in Grafton Street and they had all the best quality of stuff. Law and order had completely broken down." [232]

The looting that Mrs. Hamilton Norway classified as selfish manipulation of the city's chaos appeared to young May Hanaphy as a consequence of the lack of resources with which poor Dubliners had to contend during the Rising. Hanaphy admits that the scene was shocking, but locates looters' motivation as desperate need, rather than greedy want. Patricia Lynch was an Irish author of children's books who was associated with suffrage movements in England. After the Rising, she was asked by the editor of *Women's Dreadnought*, a socialist-leaning suffragette magazine, to travel to Dublin and report on conditions there. She wrote:

> "Everything seemed hard on poor people. They weren't allowed out of their houses except for a few moments in the morning to fetch bread and milk. Some who had no money because they were prevented from earning it had to go without unless they could share the little that their neighbours had. The step between semi-starvation and absolute starvation is so slight to these dwellers in one room tenements."[233]

Here, Lynch highlights the fundamental difficulty that the Easter Rising introduced into the already-challenging life of Dublin's poor. Unlike other contemporary observers, Lynch attempted to understand the actions of Dublin's disadvantaged citizens from their own perspectives. She recognized that the Rising ushered in a period where separation wives and other tenement dwellers could not access the resources their families so urgently needed. Separation allowances granted Dublin women a slight reprieve from the constant difficulty of tenement life, but the Easter Rising halted distribution of these payments. Tenement mothers who relied on army funds to provide for their children became increasingly desperate over the course of the week. The Easter Rising endangered their families, and tenement women, who

[232] Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life*, 215-16.
[233] Lynch, "Scenes from the Rebellion".

prioritized their status as mothers above all else, responded to that threat with the only means available to them—physical manifestations of their anger.

Conclusion

Contemporary accounts of the events of Easter Week 1916 tended to single out the separation wives as particularly harsh in their criticisms of the rebels and ruthless in their looting of abandoned shops. In reality, Dubliners of all stripes participated in these activities. The observers' insistence that the separation women were the worst offenders is perhaps more reflective of each authors' own political and moral assumptions than of the reality that unfolded over the course of the rebellion. By couching those who opposed the Rising as 'separation wives', Irish nationalists were able to claim that the only Dubliners who disagreed with the aims of nationalism were poor women who had been manipulated by the British. This interpretation, though certainly accurate in some respects, ignores any external context, and assumes that the separation wives were exclusively motivated by an emotional attachment to the militaristic and political events of the First World War. It is true that the Rising occurred on the first anniversary of the attack on Saint-Julien, in April 1915, during which the Royal Dublin Fusiliers lost many soldiers.[234] Some women who hurled insults at the defeated rebels may have done so in memory of lost husbands, fathers or sons. It is highly unlikely, however, that all of the women who attacked the retreating nationalists were intimately connected with that particular event. Contemporary responses such as these, the reasoning behind which is often accepted by historians of the Rising as fully explanatory of the separation wives' actions, chose to frame the women's responses as exclusively emotional and political, thereby overlooking crucial contextual information.

At the opposite end of the political spectrum, British soldiers and union-sympathetic Irishmen serving in the British Army also tended to describe the separation wives as primarily emotionally motivated. Monk Gibson believed that, as a result of the preponderance of Dubliners

[234] Yeates, *A City in Wartime*, 115.

fighting with the British Army in Europe, the separation women were weary that the Rising might "embarrass England."[235] Other members of the British and unionist camps were quick to distance themselves from the separation wives, who represented the immorality of Dublin's working classes. Here, the separation women were framed as greedy, selfishly motivated scoundrels who heartlessly took advantage of a dire situation. Again, there is no contextual detail offered—the separation wives were judged solely based on their actions at the moment of the Easter Rising, without any consideration of the ways in which their broader life experiences may have influenced those actions.

Some historians, such as Padraig Yeates, have noted that the women's anger may have been at least partly aimed at the destruction of their city during the Rising (Yeates 115). That women, and tenement mothers in particular, would have been upset by the violence and danger the rebels brought to their neighborhoods is a fair assumption. For the separation wives, the Easter Rising was disruptive not only because it put their homes and families in danger, but also because it prevented access to the only means through which they could provide for their children. Their actions thus cannot be understood exclusively as emotive responses to the political happenings of the war or as greedy manipulation of a city in chaos. Instead, the context of life as a member of Dublin's poorest communities must be incorporated. For tenement women, providing for children was simultaneously the most important and most difficult task of daily life. The separation allowance was often the steadiest source of income a disadvantaged Dublin mother had ever experienced, even though the amount was still insufficient to meet all of a family's needs. Yet, the allowances came with stipulations that carried moral implications about the nature of life in the tenements. Some Irish commentators described the allowances as part of a British plan to corrupt Irish women, and those who received payments were subject to

[235] Jeffrey, Ireland and the Great War, 45.

regulatory visits that further reinforced class distinctions. Despite these difficulties, many of the women who received separation allowances were able to provide better lives for their children during the war then they had ever been able to in the past.

During the Easter Rising, women were cut off from this only source of income. While all Dubliners were subject to limited food resources during Easter Week, poor families were in a particularly challenging position. The looting which wealthier Dubliners such as Mrs. Hamilton Norway perceived as dauntless greediness, was in reality an attempt to provide for families during the shortage. It was easy for someone in a position of wealth to criticize women and children for taking luxury items that they may not have strictly needed, but the value of those items when hawked on the street could go towards supporting a family for months. Similarly, the slurred insults might have been motivated by emotional upset at the effect of the Rising on Irishmen in the British forces, but they may have been equally caused by anger at the danger and destitution the rebels' brought to tenement communities. There is no answer that can account completely for the range of reactions demonstrated by separation wives during the Easter Rising, and since no direct account written by one of these women survives, justification must be reconstructed. To ignore the context of life as a member of the working classes in Dublin during the early decades of the twentieth century is to do the separation wives a disservice—their responses, like those of the contemporary observers who recorded them, were colored by their daily experiences. The nature of life in the tenements, particularly for women, meant hard work inside and out of the home every day. The separation wives' experiences of political underrepresentation and socioeconomic destitution cannot be subtracted from any evaluation of their actions during Easter Week in Dublin, 1916. In a society that prioritized motherhood as the

ultimate goal for women, an event like the Easter Rising could derail the fragile balance that kept families fed, clothed and housed.

Ultimately, separation women's reactions must be understood as the result of a complex, interwoven relationship between emotional, political, social and economic influences. No one facet alone can fully explain why separation women jeered at the defeated rebels and looted abandoned Dublin shops. However, when all factors are viewed together, a picture emerges of women who every day faced the threat of homeless and starvation, and who had absolutely no recourse through which to voice their complaints. When the full context of their lives are considered, the anger and disillusionment expressed by the Dublin separation wives of Easter Week 1916 is finally relinquished from the realm of convenient political or historical anecdote, and the long-ignored narratives of the difficult lives these women led can be given the scholarly attention they deserve.

Bibliography

I. Primary Sources

A. Newspapers

i. Nationalist Papers

Honesty (16 October 1915—22 April 1916)
The Hibernian (16 June 1915—22 April 1916)
Fianna (February 1915-January 1916)
The Felon Setter (1916)
Irish War News (25 April 1916)

ii. Unionist and British Papers

The Irish Independent (1914-1923)
The Irish News (1915-1916)
The Irish Times (1914-1918)

B. Personal Written Records

i. Letters

Fannin, Alfred, and Adrian Warwick-Haller, and Sally Warwick-Haller. *Letters from Dublin, Easter 1916: Alfred Fannin's Diary of the Rising*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995.

ii. Diaries

Martin, Mary. *Diary*. Accessed March 15, 2014. <http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/>.

iii. Memoirs

Norway, Hamilton. *The Sinn Fein Rebellion As I Saw It*. London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1916. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/43470/43470-h/43470-h.htm>.

Skinnider, Margaret. *Doing My Bit for Ireland*. New York: The Century Co., 1917.

Stephens, James. *The Insurrection in Dublin*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916. <https://archive.org/details/insurrectionindu00step>.

C. Oral Testimony

i. Easter Rising

BBC Radio Archive of Interviews with Witnesses and Participants, available via <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/>.

Brennan-Whitmore, W. J. *Dublin Burning: The Easter Rising from Behind the Barricades*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996.

Griffith, Kenneth, and Timothy O'Grady. *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution: An Oral History*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1999.

Henderson, Frank, and Michael Hopkinson. *Frank Henderson's Easter Rising: Recollections of a Dublin Volunteer*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1998.

Martin, F. X., Éamon Ó Cuív, Ruan O'Donnell, and Mícheál Ó hAodha. *Irish Volunteers 1913-1915 Recollections and Documents*. Sallins: Merrion, 2013.

McGarry, Fearghal. *Rebels: Voices from the Easter Rising*. Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2011.

Ryan, Annie. *Witnesses Inside the Easter Rising*. Dublin: Liberties, 2005.

ii. Dublin Life

Fagan, Terry. *Dublin Tenements: The True Story of Dublin's Notorious Housing As Told by the People Who Lived There*. Dublin: North Inner City Folklore Project, 2013.

Griffith, Kenneth, and Timothy O'Grady. *Ireland's Unfinished Revolution: An Oral History*. Boulder, CO: Roberts Rinehart, 1999.

Kearns, Kevin Corrigan. *Dublin's Lost Heroines: Mammies and Grannies in a Vanished City*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2004.

———. *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1994.

———. *Dublin Voices: An Oral Folk History*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1998.

D. Political Commentary

i. British

Fraser, Thomas. *The Military Danger of Home Rule for Ireland*. London: J. Murray, 1912. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/528696.html>.

Oliver, Frederick Scott. *The Irish Question, Federation or Secession*. New York: Press of the Civil Service Print. Co., 1918. <https://archive.org/details/irishquestionfed00oliv>.

Samuels, Arthur Warren. *Home Rule: Fenian Home Rule: Home Rule All Round: Devolution: What Do They Mean?* Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co, 1911. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/13553948.html>.

Archival Papers of Augustine Birrell, Chief Secretary to Ireland 1907-1914

ii. Irish

"Constitution". *Cumann Na mBan*. 1913. <http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/handle/10599/10463>.

"The Ethics of Anti-Enlisting". *Bean na hEireann*. December 1910. 2, no. 22: 5-7. < http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/handle/10599/10464>.

McGuire, James K. *What Could Germany Do for Ireland?* New York: Wolfe Tone Company, 1916.

O'Cathasaigh, P. *The Story of the Irish Citizen Army*. Dublin: Maunsel & Co, 1919.

Redmond, John Edward, and R. Barry O'Brien. *Home Rule Speeches of John Redmond, M.P*. London: T.F. Unwin, 1910. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/1017206.html>.

Shaw, Bernard. *How to Settle the Irish Question*. Dublin: Talbot Press, 1917.

E. Government Documents

Dublin Corporation's Departmental Committee Reports
Dublin Civic Survey Reports
British Parliament's Local Government Board for Ireland's Reports

F. Other

British Medical Journal Reports on Ireland 1912-1915

Catholic Working Boys' Technical Aid Association Committee. *The Blind Alley: Some Aspects of Juvenile Employment in Ireland with Proposals for the Betterment of the Conditions of the Same*. Dublin: Educational Co, 1915.

Davies, Sidney. *Dublin Types*. Dublin: Talbot Press, 1918. <http://www.forgottenbooks.com/readbook_text/Dublin_Types_1000660887/1>.

"The Looters" in "History of the Rebellion". *Irish Life*. May 1916. <http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/bitstream/10599/10498/2/Looters_ocr.pdf>.

Hepburn, Anthony C. *Ireland: 1905-1925. Volume 2, Documents & Analysis*. Newtownards: Colourpoint, 1998.

Lynch, Patricia. 1916. "Scenes from the Rebellion". *The Women's Dreadnought*.13 May 1916.

O'Day, Alan, and John Stevenson. *Irish Historical Documents Since 1800*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1992.

II. Secondary Sources

Bartlett, Thomas, and Keith Jeffery. *A Military History of Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Benton, Sarah. 1995. "Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913-23".*Feminist Review.* no. 50: 148.

Bourke, Joanna. 2000. "Effeminacy, Ethnicity and the End of Trauma: The Sufferings of 'Shell-shocked' Men in Great Britain and Ireland, 1914–39". *Journal of Contemporary History.* 35, no. 1: 57-69.

———. *Husbandry to Housewifery: Women, Economic Change, and Housework in Ireland, 1890-1914*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Boyce, D. G. "How to Settle the Irish Question: Lloyd George and Ireland, 1916-21," in Taylor, A. J. P. *Lloyd George: Twelve Essays*. New York: Atheneum, 1971.

Callan, Patrick. 1987. "Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War". *The Irish Sword: the journal of the Military History of Ireland*. 17, no. 66: 42-56

Casey, Edward, and Joanna Bourke. *"The Misfit Soldier": Edward Casey's War Story, 1914-1918*. Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 1999.

Caulfield, Max. *The Easter Rebellion*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.

Cronin, Sean. *Irish Nationalism: A History of Its Roots and Ideology*. New York: Continuum, 1981.

Curriculum Development Unit, and Gary Granville. *Divided City: Portrait of Dublin, 1913*. Dublin: O'Brien Educational, 1978.

Daly, Mary E. *Dublin, the Deposed Capital: A Social and Economic History, 1860-1914*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1984.

———. 2006. "Marriage, Fertility and Women's Lives in Twentieth-Century Ireland (C. 1900-C. 1970)". *Women's History Review.* 15, no. 4: 571-585.

———. 1982. "Social Structure of the Dublin Working Class, 1871-1911". *Irish Historical Studies.* 23, no. 90: 121-133.

Delay, C. 2012. "'Deposited Elsewhere': The Sexualized Female Body and the Modern Irish Landscape". *Etudes Irlandaises.* 37, no. 1: 71-88.

Denman, Terence. 1994. "'The Red Livery of Shame': The Campaign against Army Recruitment in Ireland, 1899-1914". *Irish Historical Studies.* 29, no. 114: 208-233.

Dhaibheid C.N. 2012. "The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion in Ireland, 1916-1918". *Historical Journal.* 55, no. 3: 705-729.

Fitzpatrick, David. 1995. "The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918". *The Historical Journal.* 38, no. 4: 1017.

Githens-Mazer, Jonathan. *Myths and Memories of the Easter Rising: Cultural and Political Nationalism in Ireland*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006.

Gregory, Adrian, and Senia Pašeta. *Ireland and the Great War: A War to Unite Us All?* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Hearn, Mona. *Below Stairs: Domestic Service Remembered in Dublin and Beyond, 1880-1922*. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993.

Hearne, Dana. 1992. "The Irish Citizen 1914-1916: Nationalism, Feminism, and Militarism". *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies.* 18, no. 1: 1-14.

Hegarty, Shane, and Fintan O'Toole. *The Irish Times Book of the 1916 Rising*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2006.

Higgins, Roisín. *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising*. Cork: Cork University Press, 2012.

Inglis, Tom. 2005. "Origins and Legacies of Irish Prudery: Sexuality and Social Control in Modern Ireland". *Éire-Ireland.* 40, no. 3&4: 9-37.

Jalland, Patricia. 1976. "A Liberal Chief Secretary and the Irish Question: Augustine Birrell, 1907-1914". *The Historical Journal.* 19, no. 2: 421-451.

Jeffery, Keith. *Ireland and the Great War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Jenkins, Brian. *Irish Nationalism and the British State From Repeal to Revolutionary Nationalism*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006.

Johnson, Nuala Christina. *Ireland, the Great War, and the Geography of Remembrance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Kanya-Forstner, Martha. 1999. "Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool". *Immigrants & Minorities.* 18, no. 2-3: 168-188.

Kearns, Gerry. 2004. "Mother Ireland and the Revolutionary Sisters". *Cultural Geographies.* 11, no. 4: 443-467.

Kearns, Kevin C. 1982. "Preservation and Transformation of Georgian Dublin". *Geographical Review.* 72, no. 3: 270-290.

Kennedy, Christopher M. *Genesis of the Rising, 1912-1916 A Transformation of Nationalist Opinion*. New York: Peter Lang, 2010.

Knirck, Jason K. *Women of the Dáil: Gender, Republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006.

Kok, J. *Rebellious Families: Household Strategies and Collective Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2002.

Luddy, Maria. 1988. "Women and Charitable Organisations in Nineteenth Century Ireland". *Women's Studies International Forum.* 11, no. 4: 301-305.

Luddy, Maria, and Cliona Murphy. *Women Surviving*. Swords, Co. Dublin, Ireland: Poolbeg, 1989.

Lynch, John, and Jo Campling. *A Tale of Three Cities: Comparative Studies in Working Class Life*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1998.

MacPherson, D. A. J. *Women and the Irish Nation: Gender, Associational Culture and Irish Identity, 1890-1914*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Matthews, Ann. *Renegades: Irish Republican Women 1900-1922*. Cork: Mercier Press, 2010.

Maguire, Martin. 1994. "The Organisation and Activism of Dublin's Protestant Working Class, 1883-1935". *Irish Historical Studies.* 29, no. 113: 65-87.

McCarthy, Cal. *Cumann Na MBan and the Irish Revolution*. Cork: Collins Press, 2007.

McCarthy, Mark. *Ireland's 1916 Rising Explorations of History-Making, Commemoration & Heritage in Modern Times*. Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2012.

McCoole, Sinéad. *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years, 1900-23*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

McManus, Ruth. 2003. "Blue Collars, Red Forts, and Green Fields: Working-Class Housing in Ireland in the Twentieth Century". *International Labor and Working-Class History.* 64, no. 1: 38-54.

Murray, Peter. 1990. “The First World War and a Dublin Distillery Worforce: Recruting

and Redundancy at John Power & Son, 1915-1917". *Saothar, Journal of the Irish Labor History Society*. 15, no. 1: 48-56.

Ní Dhonnchadha, Máirín, and Theo Dorgan. *Revising the Rising*. Derry: Field Day, 1991

Novick, Ben. *Conceiving Revolution: Irish Nationalist Propaganda During the First World War*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001.

O'Brien, Joseph V. *Dear, Dirty Dublin: A City in Distress, 1899-1916*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

Ó Cléirigh, Nellie. *Hardship and High Living: Irish Women's Lives, 1808-1923*. Dublin: Portobello Press, 2003.

O'Connor, Sarah, and Christopher C. Shepard. *Women, Social and Cultural Change in Twentieth Century Ireland: Dissenting Voices?* Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008.

O'Donnell, Ian. 2005. "Lethal Violence in Ireland, 1841 to 2003; Famine, Celibacy and Parental Pacification". *The British Journal of Criminology*. 45, no. 5: 671-695.

Ó hOgartaigh, Margaret. 2009. "A Quiet Revolution: Women and Second-Level Education in Ireland, 1878–1930". *New Hibernia Review*. 13, no. 2: 36-51.

O'Mahony, Patrick J., and Gerard Delanty. *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity, and Ideology*. Houndsmills: Macmillan Press, 1998.

Perry, Nicholas. 1994. "Nationality in the Irish Infantry Regiments in the First World War". *War & Society*. 12, no. 1: 65-95.

Prunty, Jacinta. *Dublin Slums, 1800-1925: A Study in Urban Geography*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1998.

Rains, Stephanie. *Commodity Culture and Social Class in Dublin 1850-1916*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010.

Rees, R. *Ireland 1905-1925. Volume 1, Text & Historiography*. Newtownards: Colourpoint Books, 1998.

Regan, John. *Myth and the Irish State Historical Problems and Other Essays*. Sallins, Co. Kildare, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2013.

Rose S.O. 2014. "The Politics of Service and Sacrifice in WWI Ireland and India". *Twentieth Century British History*. 25, no. 3: 368-390.

Smyth, Isabelle. “The Story of Mary Martin (née Levins-Moore), 1866-1955”. The Diary of Mary Martin. <http://dh.tcd.ie/martindiary/?page_id=333>. (retrieved July 14, 2014).

Throop, Elizabeth A. *Net Curtains and Closed Doors: Intimacy, Family, and Public Life in Dublin*. Westport, Conn: Bergin & Garvey, 1999.

Townshend, Charles. 2004. "Religion, War, and Identity in Ireland*". *The Journal of Modern History.* 76, no. 4: 882-902.

Townsley, Amanda Rae. *Ireland and the Difficulties of World War I Memory*. Pullman, Wash: Washington State University, 2010. <http://www.dissertations.wsu.edu/Thesis/Spring2010/a_townsley_060210.pdf>.

Walsh, Maurice. *The News from Ireland; Foreign Correspondents and the Irish Revolution*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2008

Ward, Margaret. *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism*. London: Pluto Press, 1995.

Weihman, Lisa. 2004. "Doing My Bit for Ireland: Transgressing Gender in the Easter Rising". *Éire-Ireland.* 39, no. 3&4: 228-249.

Whelan, Bernadette. *Women and Paid Work in Ireland, 1500-1930*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000.

Yeates, Padraig. *A City in Wartime: Dublin 1914-1918*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2011.