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**University of Southampton**

Faculty of Humanities

School of Modern Languages

**Photography, War and Gender: Redefining Women's Militancy During  
and After Conflict in Ireland and Spain**

By

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March, 2022



# University of Southampton

## Abstract

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## **Photography, War and Gender: Redefining Women's Militancy During and After Conflict in Ireland and Spain**

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Bringing together the comparative case studies of revolutionary Ireland (1916-1923) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), this thesis provides an innovative social history of militant women's photographic practices during conflict and in its aftermath. In particular, this study draws on material and feminist approaches to photography as it focuses on women's roles as producers, editors, and collectors of photography across public and private networks, as it traces the complex lives and afterlives of these photographs as they circulate during and after war. Historicising and rereading militant women's photography uncovers alternative narratives of war that enrich scholarly knowledge of gender and conflict. This research reveals that militant women used photography to articulate their own militant identities, to legitimise and negotiate their participation during war, and to contest their erasure from public narratives of conflict. Despite facing violent repression, militant women's photographic practices subverted the institutional attempts to erase them by building counter-narratives of defiant remembrance. This thesis calls on us to recognise these narratives and bring them to the forefront of our understanding of gender and war in Ireland and Spain.

In addition, reconceptualising our approach to militant women's photographic practices enables us to move beyond linear narratives of forgetting and rediscovery, and interrogate the role of photographic visibility within patriarchal narratives of war. Within contemporary cultural discourses, visibility is framed as a means of recovery for women; however, the case studies in this thesis reveal that this renewed visibility is still formed in negotiation with patriarchal frameworks of war. Within this representation of women's militancy, active participation is visualised within a masculinist framework that erases those who do not fit within this limited definition. This thesis argues that the alternative gazes on war seen in militant women's photographic practices hold the potential to disrupt and dismantle patriarchal narratives of war.



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# Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Jessica Elizabeth McIvor

Title of thesis: Photography, War and Gender: Redefining Women's Militancy During and After Conflict in Ireland and Spain

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

Signature:

Date: 11/3/2022



## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, this thesis is indebted to my supervisors, who have shown me incredible support throughout this process. Dr Jane Lavery, thank you for prompting me to think about doctoral study in 2016 and continually motivating me to keep going through this project. Dr Scott Soo, thank you for your continual faith in this project and for keeping me driving forwards, particularly throughout the past two years of lockdowns. Your belief in my research has been invaluable to me. Dr Erika Hanna, thank you for taking me under your wing and inspiring me to focus on photography. I am so grateful for all your advice and insights over the past four years and for our conversations on the importance of accessible, feminist research. It has been a joy to work with you all, and I cannot thank you enough for all your enthusiasm and encouragement.

My sincere thanks to the South West Wales Doctoral Training Partnership and to the British Association of Irish Studies for funding this research, and introducing me to an invaluable community of academics and researchers. Thank you to everyone at Department of Modern Languages at the University of Southampton and the Department of History at the University of Bristol for all your support throughout this project. In particular, I would like to thank Dr Eleanor Jones, Dr Tony Campbell, Dr Aude Campmas, and Dr Heidi Armbruster at the University of Southampton and Professor James Thompson at the University of Bristol for their valuable feedback on this project.

This research could not have been done without the support and guidance of archivists across the International Institute of Social History, the National Libraries of Ireland and Spain, the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, the University College Dublin Archives, and the Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo. In particular, I would like to thank Aoife Torpey and Brian Crowley of Kilmainham Gaol, who were invaluable in suggesting sources, developing my thinking, and supporting me through my placement in the museum in the midst of the January 2021 lockdown. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with you both.

The PhD is often thought of as a solitary process, but the research communities I have been part of across Bristol and Southampton have been a constant source of support and inspiration. To everyone at Bristol and Southampton, particularly Dr James Watts, Dr Tabby Stanmore, Dr Penny Cartwright, Dr Joan Passey, Dr Chiara Amoretti, Dr Dan Booker, Eline Tabak, Tom Wardle, and Emily Hooke, thank you for all the joy you have given me throughout this process. I could not have done the final year of this research without the support and encouragement of the British Association of Irish Studies ECR community, particularly Dr Sophie Cooper, Vikki Barry Brown, Abigail Fletcher, Dr Kathy Davies, Dr Amanda Hall Redburn, Beth Kitson, and Dr Erin Scheopner. Our Tuesday writing retreats propelled me through this thesis, and I am so grateful to you all for offering advice and helping me understand what I wanted this thesis to be. Beyond academia, I would like to thank my friends and family across Bristol and Belfast for all their kindness and encouragement. I am indebted to Dr Charlotte Walmesley and Katie Lucas, who have kept me sane throughout this project. Words cannot do justice to all the support, guidance, and motivation you have given me during these past four years.

Finally, I want to thank my family, who have been my rock throughout this project. Thank you to my mum for her motivation, my dad for his proofreading skills and encouragement, and my sister Emma for all her advice and support. I could not have done this without you.



## Definitions and Abbreviations

CNT-FAI.....Confederación Nacional del Trabajo-Federación Anarquista Ibérica, National Confederation of Labour- Iberian Anarchist Federation, a Spanish organisation of anarcho-syndicalists.

Cumann na nGael... The ruling political party in the Irish Free State from 1923-1932, set up by the anti-Treaty victors of the Irish Civil War. It merged with two other organisations to form Fine Gael in 1933.

Cumann na mBan.....An Irish nationalist women's organisation founded in 1914.

Fianna Fail.....An Irish republican party founded by Eamon de Valera in 1926 after a split from Sinn Féin.

IRA .....Irish Republican Army, used to refer to paramilitary organisations in Ireland and Northern Ireland throughout 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this thesis, I use it in reference to the 'old' IRA (1919-1921), which operated during the War of Independence and the anti-Treaty IRA (1922-1969), which emerged after the split in the IRA during the Irish Civil War.

PCE .....Partido Comunista Española, Spanish Communist Party, founded in 1921.

POUM .....Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, United Marxist Workers Party (active 1935-1980).

PP .....Partido Popular; a modern, right-wing Spanish political party currently in the opposition.

PSOE .....Partido Socialista Obrero Español; a modern, left-wing Spanish political party currently in government.

Sinn Féin.....An Irish republican political party, first formed in 1905. It is currently active in both the north and south of Ireland.



## Chapter 1

### Introduction: Seeing Women, Seeing War

Writing in 1993, Miriam Cooke described the erasure of women from narratives of war with a visual metaphor: 'It is like women at the front—you can see them but until recently you could not speak of them'.<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, the act of seeing was not linked to recognition, but rather to erasure. While Cooke used women's writings to affirm their presence in the war narrative, her framing of visuality prompts the question: what does it mean to look at women during war? Who looks at them, and how is their gaze enmeshed within established hierarchies of power? How do women see themselves during war and what happens when they look back? In this thesis, I use Irish and Spanish militant women's photographic practices during and after conflict to answer these questions. Photography provides a physical means of mapping the shifting ways of seeing militant women in war, and examining how they negotiated these different ways of seeing.<sup>2</sup> Bringing together the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, this thesis is an innovative social history of militant women's photographic practices during and after conflict, focusing on their roles as the subjects, producers, and keepers of images. By examining these photographic practices, I trace how women redefined themselves outside of patriarchal norms, articulated their own participation in war, and resisted erasure. Through this empirical research, I also explore the theoretical question of gendered visibility during conflict, questioning how visibility is used both as a tool of recognition and erasure. By rethinking women's visibility and erasure in cultural narratives of war, I argue that we can begin to deconstruct and dismantle the patriarchal frameworks that maintain their exclusion.

This complex interplay of visibility and erasure is present through Irish and Spanish militant women's photographic practices during and after conflict. Figure 1.1, for example, shows how the Irish militant Eithne Coyle used photography to document and commemorate her experiences of war. After escaping from Mountjoy Prison in Dublin on a dark, October night in 1921, Coyle and her comrades Linda Kearns and Mae Burke fled to an Irish Republican Army (IRA) training camp in Carlow, where they stayed until a truce was declared between the IRA and the British state in December. During this time, the three women were

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<sup>1</sup> Miriam Cooke, 'Wo-man, Retelling the War Myth', in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. by Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 177-204 (p. 177).

<sup>2</sup> By ways of seeing, I refer to Hal Foster's definition of the term as the social processes and practices of making something or someone visible or invisible. Hal Foster, *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Dia Art Foundation, 1988), pp. ix-xiv.

photographed training with rifles in a forest clearing. Dressed in warm coats, hats and Sam Browne belts, a makeshift uniform that combined masculine and feminine items, these women appear ready for action and prepared to continue fighting for Irish independence.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 1.1**, Unknown, 'Photograph of Eithne Coyle, Linda Kearns and Mae Burke Training', photograph, Tipperary, 1921. Courtesy of UCD Archives.

For Irish militant women, and Irish women more generally in the twentieth century, photography was a space to visualise revolutionary identities and imagine new, radical ideals of gendered relations, which would go unfulfilled.<sup>4</sup> During the revolutionary period, gender roles became more fluid as women participated actively as nationalist militants, but in the post-war state, dominated by Catholic ideologies, revolutionary possibilities of gender were rejected in favour of imposing traditional, patriarchal gender roles.<sup>5</sup>

Fifteen years later, another militant woman would be photographed with her rifle, once more defying the gendered discourses that have positioned women on the periphery of war.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A Sam Browne belt is a leather belt with a narrow diagonal strap used in military and paramilitary uniforms. Jane Tynan discusses Irish women's revolutionary uniforms in depth in Jane Tynan, 'The Unmilitary Appearance of the 1916 Rebels', in *Making 1916: The Visual and Material Culture of the Easter Rising*, ed. by Lisa Godson and Joanne Brück (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 25-33.

<sup>4</sup> Erika Hanna, 'Reading Irish Women's Lives in Photograph Albums', *Cultural and Social History*, 11.1 (2014), 89-109.

<sup>5</sup> Maryann Valiulis, 'The Politics of Gender in the Irish Free State', *Women's History Review*, 20.4 (2011), 569-78.

<sup>6</sup> For more on how gendered discourses situate women on the margins of war see: Jean Bethke Elshain, *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 8.



**Figure 1.2**, Antoni Campaña, 'Miliciana a la Caserna Bakunin', photograph, Barcelona, 1936. Courtesy of the International Institute of Social History.

Documenting Spanish Republican mobilisation in the early days of the civil war, Catalan photographer Antoni Campaña shot this photograph of an anonymous young militiawoman outside the anarchist Bakunin Barracks in August 1936 in Barcelona, seen in Figure 1.2.<sup>7</sup> Unlike Figure 1.1, she is captured alone, the camera angled upwards to invest her with a sense of power. Her rifle hangs on her back, and though she smiles at the camera, her eyes are serious, giving her a gravitas fitting with the context of encroaching war. Both these images evoke a sense of revolutionary defiance, and the overt militarism in both photographs has been used to signify women's active participation in conflict. In doing so, we frame these images as celebratory evidence of women's empowerment and presence in a male-dominated

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to clarify here that when referencing the Irish nationalist and republican movements, which fought for Irish independence from Britain, I will use a non-capitalised 'r' and 'n'. In reference to the Spanish Republicans, a collection of myriad groups that fought against the Spanish Nationalists, I will use a capitalised 'R'. In reference to the Spanish Nationalist movement, which incited a coup against the Second Republic and was led during the war by General Francisco Franco, I will use a capitalised 'N'.

history: a tool to make the marginalised histories of women visible. Yet, the photographic image of a militant woman does not inherently disturb the patriarchal frameworks of war. Instead, the act of making visible can in fact silence and disempower women.<sup>8</sup> As I will argue throughout this thesis, an uncritical reliance on photographs as supposedly objective evidence flattens the complex layers of meaning contained within photographs and undermines their agency in shaping public narratives of the past.<sup>9</sup>

Photographs are not static images—as objects, they are circulated and exchanged, remade into different formats, transferred between different spaces, and different meanings and narratives are imposed upon them as they are looked at in new contexts.<sup>10</sup> In order to understand the complexities of how women have been seen during war, it is critical to look beyond the visual and trace their post-war afterlives.<sup>11</sup> Figures 1.1 and 1.2 have achieved new prominence within contemporary commemorations of the Irish Revolution (1916-1923) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) as documents illustrating women's participation in conflict—they are reprinted in articles and books on forgotten women, spray-painted on the sides of buildings, and reproduced without credit on social media platforms.<sup>12</sup> Yet, these photographs were initially excluded from this public gaze.

Coyle's photograph, depicting a militarised femininity that was anathema to the Catholicised womanhood of the post-war Irish Free State, remained in her personal collection until it was deposited into University College Dublin Archives by her children in 1982. Coyle continued her activism after the civil war as president of the now illegal Cumann na mBan, yet

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<sup>8</sup> Patricia Hayes, 'Introduction: Visual Genders', *Gender and History*, 17.3 (2005), 519-37, p. 521. Patricia Hayes demands that we look beyond the mandate of making visible to instead interrogate how and why women are made visible, and conversely how and why they are made invisible.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Material Beings: Objecthood and Ethnographic Photographs', *Visual Studies*, 17.1 (2002), 67-75.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Rose, 'Practising Photography: An Archive, a Study, Some Photographs and a Researcher', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26.4 (2000), 555-71, pp. 555-6.

<sup>11</sup> As discussed by Samuel Merrill's analysis of reproduction of images, 'the public spread and iconisation of photographs also connects with Aby Warburg's concept of an image's *afterlife [nachleben]*—the "complex set of operations in which forgetting, the transformation of sense, involuntary memory, and unexpected rediscovery work in unison" to influence an image's later reuse, rec-ontexualisation and reinterpretation'. Samuel Merrill, 'Following *The Woman with the Handbag*: Mnemonic Context Collapse and the Anti-Fascist Activist Appropriation of an Iconic Historical Photograph' in *Social Movements, Cultural Memory and Digital Media: Mobilising Mediated Remembrance*, ed. by Samuel Merrill, Emily Keightley and Priska Daphi (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 111-40, (p. 114).

<sup>12</sup> For examples of how these photographs have been reproduced in contemporary contexts see: Virginia Pérez Alonso, 'Combatientes' *Público*, 14 April 2021, <https://temas.publico.es/combatientes>, (accessed 1 May 2021); Margaret Ward, 'No Longer Forgotten: Women Activists from the Decade of Centenaries', *The Irish Times*, 1 December 2016, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/no-longer-forgotten-women-activists-from-the-decade-of-centenaries-1.2889074>. (accessed 1 May 2021).

this photograph remained a personal snapshot.<sup>13</sup> Campaña's photograph was not published during the war, and it was only attributed to him in 2018. After the capture of Barcelona in 1939, Campaña surrendered to Francoist troops and photographed their victory brigade, an act that allowed him to continue working as a photographer during the dictatorship. He deliberately hid negatives of his war photography in a garage near his home, which his family found after his death.<sup>14</sup> These photographs are not only visual evidence of women's presence; they are objects with an embodied history that is determined by how they are used and circulated, by what is done to them and who sees them.<sup>15</sup> As these photographs move from personal collections, to institutional archives to public reproductions, new meanings are constructed around them. By analysing these journeys, I will demonstrate how photographs shaped framings of women's militancy in conflict. Furthermore, I will illuminate how women's engagement with photography allowed them to articulate their complex experiences of conflict and challenge their erasure from institutional narratives of war in Ireland and Spain.

This thesis is the first comparative study of militant women's relationship with photography during and after conflict in Ireland and Spain. At first glance, the decision to place Ireland and Spain into a comparative context may seem incongruous. From a militaristic approach, these conflicts are entirely distinct: the Irish revolutionary period arose out of an anti-colonial desire for independence, and its guerrilla-focused civil war was both shorter and resulted in less loss of life than the Spanish Civil War.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the Spanish conflict was an international focal point that foreshadowed the oncoming political and ideological battles of the Second World War, and it marked the beginning of a new, modern warfare.<sup>17</sup> However,

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<sup>13</sup> Cumann na mBan was declared an illegal organisation during civil war in 1923 until 1932 when Fianna Fáil, a political party established by Eamon de Valera, reversed the ban.

<sup>14</sup> Manuel Blanco and Arnau González, 'La Barcelona de la Guerra Civil Española a Través de la Mirada de Antoni Campaña. Análisis Fotográfico e Histórico', *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 25.2 (2020), 309-21.

<sup>15</sup> Photographic scholars such as Elizabeth Edwards, Christopher Pinney and Gillian Rose have called for a new perspective on photography that disrupts the semiotic, linguistic methods that focus exclusively on the visual qualities of the image. Building on ethnographic approaches, these scholars argue that photographs must be understood as material, sensory objects within everyday social practices and their physical presence in the social world as objects that are written on, exchanged, displayed and hidden. See: Elizabeth Edwards, 'Thinking Photography Beyond the Visual?' in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, ed. by J.J. Long, Andrea Noble and Edward Welch, (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 31-48; Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs. Objects, Histories* (London: Routledge, 2004); Christopher Pinney, *Photos of the Gods: The Printed Image and Political Struggle in India* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004); Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly, *Visuality/Materiality: Images, Objects and Practices* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> For a general overview of the Irish revolutionary period see: Marie Coleman, *The Irish Revolution, 1916-1923* (London: Routledge, 2014); Roy Foster, *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890-1923* (London: Penguin, 2014); Senia Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Charles Townshend, *The Republic: The Fight For Irish Independence, 1918-1923* (London: Penguin, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> For a general overview of the Spanish Civil War see: Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic At War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Julián Casanova, *The Spanish Republic and Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Michael Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-Making Spain since 1936*

historians of both conflicts have stressed the need to contextualise these wars within a broader context, and a gendered approach to both conflicts demonstrates clear parallels that go unremarked on within a purely militaristic study.<sup>18</sup> Adopting a gendered approach to war complicates and deepens our understanding of the social history of war and allows women's experiences to be reinstated into general historiographies of war.<sup>19</sup> In both Ireland and Spain, war was a site of radical potential for the renegotiation of gendered relations.<sup>20</sup> Both conflicts are notable for their mobilisation of women as active participants within the battlefield, the rearguard, and the domestic sphere. In contrast to the usual trend of post-conflict demobilisation, Irish and Spanish militant women were rapidly demobilised in the midst of war. Further to this, both conflicts were widely photographed, and these images have shaped the memory and legacy of these wars, and the roles of women within them. Finally, the contemporary cultural memory surrounding both these wars share a similar narrative regarding women's participation: that they were initially active during war, that they were forgotten in the aftermath of war and only rediscovered recently. In this thesis, however, I complicate these narratives of rediscovery by critically examining the cultural processes behind their public erasure and remembrance.<sup>21</sup> In doing so, I shed new light on the complexities of the multi-layered narratives of women's militancy and provide a model on how to approach re-integrating them into public narratives of war.

Through engaging with and tracing militant women's photographic practices, I have become fascinated with the complexities of making women visible within public narratives of war. By considering the entanglement of visibility, erasure, and power within these photographs, I have developed three arguments that are central to this thesis. Firstly, I argue that photographs are not simply a means of making women visible, they are also a mechanism of erasure. While the circulation of photographs has allowed for a limited public visibility for some militant women in Ireland and Spain, this visibility has been formed in negotiation with patriarchal processes of erasure, which excludes the broader experiences of militant women.

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge* (London: Harper Collins, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Linda Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2020), p. 6; Giuliana Chamedes, 'Transnationalising the Spanish Civil War', *Contemporary European History*, 29.3 (2020), 261-3.

<sup>19</sup> Françoise Thébaud, 'Understanding Twentieth-Century Wars through Women and Gender: Forty Years of Historiography', *Clio*, 39 (2014), 152-78, pp. 152-3.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Vincent, 'Political Violence and Mass Society: A European Civil War?' in *The Oxford handbook of European History, 1914-1945*, ed. by Nicholas Doumanis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 389-410, (pp. 389-91).

<sup>21</sup> Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), p. 2.

This entanglement of visibility and erasure is a facet of both the initial production of photography of militant women and the afterlives of these photographs from the post-conflict period to the present day.<sup>22</sup> Throughout this thesis, I consider the question of how to locate women's experiences of war within these exclusionary narratives, and whether these experiences can be detached from the celebratory visual mythologies they are caught within.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, I advocate for a greater consideration of militant women's photographic practices. This follows on from feminist scholars of photography, such as Pippa Oldfield, who argue that we should understand women's engagement with war as an active process and 'explore the ways in which women have not only taken pictures, but have instigated, mobilised, viewed, collected and shared photography'.<sup>24</sup> Within all my chapters, I actively include discussion of militant women's engagement with photography through producing their own images, creating scrapbooks and albums, and republishing images under their own control. I argue that these are examples of how women constructed an alternative gaze to the dominant narratives of war in Ireland and Spain. Foregrounding women's photographic agency adds a new perspective to how we approach women's positions within the public narratives of war.<sup>25</sup>

Thirdly, I argue for the need to go beyond simplistic narratives of erasure and rediscovery in regards to militant women. Frequently, women's presence in narratives of war is justified through presenting them within paradigms of celebratory recovery, wherein a woman is forgotten and then rescued by historians.<sup>26</sup> In this thesis, I seek to move away from this dynamic by focusing on how networks of militant women in Ireland and Spain actively used

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<sup>22</sup> Andrea Noble, 'Gender in the Archive: *Maria Zavala* and the Drama of (Not) Looking' in *Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative*, ed. by Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), pp. 136-48, (pp. 146).

<sup>23</sup> Throughout this thesis, I refer to the concept of myths and mythologisation as a tool for approaching and understanding the past within political movements, following from Robert Gildea's definition of myth as 'as a shared construction of the past that fulfils political purposes of definition, binding, and legitimisation'. Gildea, Robert, '1848 in European Collective Memory' in *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848–1849: From Reform to Reaction*, ed. by R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 207–36 (p. 207).

<sup>24</sup> Pippa Oldfield, 'Calling the Shots: Women's Photographic Engagement with War in Hemispheric America, 1910-1990', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2016), p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> In focusing on women's photographic agency, I refer to Kirstie Fleckenstein's definition of visual agency as 'the right to look and act upon that looking as a means of exposing and resisting cultural conventions oppressive to women'. Kirstie Fleckenstein, 'Reiterating with a Difference: Feminist Visual Agency and Late Nineteenth-Century Photography', *Studies in the Humanities*, 41.1-2 (2015), 1-30, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Joan Scott problematises this approach in her essay 'The Evidence of Experience', where she argues that the project of 'making visible' prevents critical examination of the ideological system surrounding this previously invisible experience. Furthermore, this approach establishes the authority of the historian's outside gaze, overlooking the agency of the subjects of this historical research and any previous efforts they themselves had made to make themselves visible. Joan Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, 17.4 (1991), 773-797, p. 797.

photographs within memory-keeping practices to resist erasure, thus demonstrating how simplistic narratives of forgetting and rediscovery elide women's agency. Central to this is my focus on women not only as the subjects of photography, but their role as the producers and keepers of photographs.

The three core aims of this thesis evolved from these arguments. Firstly, through analysing the dynamics of how women were seen in war photography, I aim to deconstruct the binary conceptualisation of visibility. Discussion of women's roles in war are often presented within a rhetoric of visibility and invisibility, yet framing women's participation within this dichotomy simplifies the complex processes of how women's militancy was visualised during war, and how they used their own photographic practices and engagement to create their own ways of seeing and looking back. Through examining how photographs were used during war and its aftermath, I will demonstrate that visibility should be understood as a process of continuous negotiation, wherein the processes of being seen and being erased operate simultaneously. Secondly, I address the need to consider photographs as culturally mediated, historical objects rather than as illustrations. The need to reconsider how photographs are used and analysed has been consistently discussed by visual and material culture scholars, yet within histories of the Irish Revolution and Spanish Civil War, photographs are primarily used as illustrations without critical analysis. Thirdly, my research will show how photographs of militant women and their photographic practices can be used to disrupt patriarchal narratives of war. The current usage of these images as a panacea to the exclusion of women from the historical narrative does not address how these women were erased or how we can challenge this erasure.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in this thesis I aim to provide a model to understand how erasure occurs, and how we can follow on from militant women's own acts of defiance against erasure to challenge the construction of exclusionary narratives, rather than reinforce reductive mythologies that deify some women while erasing many others.

In order to achieve these aims, I have developed the following research questions. I begin by asking what bringing the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War into dialogue can tell us about how militant women are seen and remembered within cultural narratives of war, and how women's militancy is mediated through photography? In addition, how did the circulation of photographs of militant women affect the construction of gendered narratives during war and what was the role of photography within processes of erasure? During both

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<sup>27</sup> In this approach of disrupting patriarchal narratives, I take inspiration from the work of feminist art historians such as Griselda Pollock, who argued that a process of radical disruption, and indeed destruction, is necessary for women to be included and recognised in a non-tokenistic manner. Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003).

conflicts, women pushed the gendered boundaries of war and took on radical new roles across the front, the rearguard and the homefront, which were widely photographed and circulated both in the public space of the press, but also within women's own private networks. However, the imposition of Catholic ideologies by the state in the aftermath of war redefined women primarily as wives and mothers, erasing their widespread engagement from the national narratives of war. Yet, militant women were not passive against this reconstruction of the patriarchal order: they continued their activism fighting for the revolutionary ideals of the Easter Rising and the Spanish Republic, and they continually challenged their exclusion from state narratives of war. By analysing women's engagement with photography in the post-war state, I ask, how did women use photography to resist erasure? Within recent years, some women have regained prominence within national narratives of war, with photographs used to authenticate their presence and participation in combat. Yet their inclusion is frequently predicated on their exceptional role within a male-dominated environment, with little acknowledgment of the collective actions of militant women. I conclude by considering how the reintegration of militant women into mainstream historical narratives has relied on photography as a source and the impact of this upon contemporary narratives constructed around women's militancy.

In seeking to answer these questions, this thesis forms an innovative new contribution to both gendered histories of conflict in Ireland and Spain, and the growing work on photographic and social history. As a social history of militant women's engagement with photography, I will shed new light on how women's militancy was mediated through photography during the interwar period. In particular, my analysis of militant women's own photography, their practices of remaking images, and their role as photographic collectors will enrich our understanding of the gendered dynamics of war photography and women's photographic agency during and after war. By examining how photography was used as a tool of both recognition and erasure, I will demonstrate the need to approach photographs of militant women in a more nuanced way. In particular, I advocate for reconsidering the process of becoming visible not as a simplistic, linear narrative of progress, but rather as a series of continual negotiations enmeshed within patriarchal understandings of gender and war. In doing so, this thesis highlights the need for a more critical approach to photographs as historical objects, to further our understanding of photography in Irish and Spanish studies. Finally, in providing a longer-term perspective on how militant women in Ireland and Spain used their own engagement with photography to negotiate their position within state narratives of war, I add complexity to our understanding of how women's militancy is remembered by foregrounding women's agency within these efforts.

## 1.1 Contextualising Women's Participation in Conflict during the Irish Revolutionary Period and the Spanish Civil War

Operating across the frontlines, the rearguard, and the homefront, Irish and Spanish women's active participation in war disturbed the patriarchal gendered order of pre-war Ireland and Spain. The nature of their participation was wide-ranging, spanning from active combat and combat support, to political activism, espionage, campaigning, and fundraising, to providing safe houses and medical care to combatants.<sup>28</sup> Yet, within both Ireland and Spain, public narratives of war have been dominated by masculine experiences, with women's roles in these conflicts confined to the margins of history. Feminist scholarship of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War uses gendered approaches to disrupt this historiographical exclusion.<sup>29</sup> Since the 1970s, feminist historians have drawn on gender as a way to interrogate the hierachal power dynamics that excluded women from mainstream narratives of war.<sup>30</sup> By approaching gender as a construct of power and control performed within social and cultural structures, we can construct new ways of seeing the past that explicitly foreground women's agency and participation, particularly in moments such as war when normative concepts of gender are ruptured.<sup>31</sup> In this section, I use this scholarship to contextualise women's participation in war in Ireland and Spain, drawing parallels between these two conflicts.

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<sup>28</sup> For work exploring these see: Nic Dháibhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association'; Dianne Hall, 'Irish Republican Women in Australia: Kathleen Barry and Linda Kearns's Tour in 1924-5', *Irish Historical Studies*, 43.163 (2019), 73-93; Siobhra Aiken, "'The Women's Weapon": Reclaiming the Hunger Strike in the Fiction of Dorothy Macardle, Máiread Ní Ghrádá and Máirín Cregan', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 14.1 (2021), 89-109; Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 63-100; Brett Schmoll, 'Solidarity and Silence: Motherhood in the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 15.4 (2014), 475-89.

<sup>29</sup> Feminist approaches to the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War have blossomed in recent years, with new studies expanding and broadening the field across multiple disciplines. Key players in the development of these fields include Margaret Ward, Sinéad McCoole, Mary McAuliffe and Linda Connolly in regards to the Irish revolutionary period, and Mary Nash, Giuliana di Febo, Martha Ackelsberg, Sofía Rodríguez López and Ángela Cenarro in regards to the Spanish Civil War. For an in-depth review of gendered approaches to the Irish revolutionary period see: Mary McAuliffe, 'Irish Histories: Gender, Women and Sexualities' in *Palgrave Advances in Irish History*, ed. by Mary McAuliffe (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) and Linda Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). For an overview of gendered approaches to the Spanish Civil War see: Cándida Martínez López and Mary Nash, 'ARENAL, 20 Años de Historia de las Mujeres en España', *Arenal*, 20.1 (2013), 5-40; Ana Martínez Rus, 'Mujeres y Guerra Civil: Un Balance Historiográfico', *Studios Historica, Historia Contemporánea*, 32.1 (2014), 333-43, and Mary Nash and Marisa Ferrandis Garrido, 'Dos Décadas de Historia de las Mujeres en España: Una Reconsideración', *Historia Social*, 9 (1991), 137-61.

<sup>30</sup> For example: Leila Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pluto Press, 1983); Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out Of The Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (London: Pandora, 1987); Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Susan Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> Joan Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91.5 (1986), 1053-75, p. 1072.

Since the revival of Irish nationalist politics in the late nineteenth century, women were embedded within the nationalist movement. Organisations such as the Ladies Land League, formed in 1881, and Inghinidhe na hÉireann, established in 1900, enabled women to engage in both cultural nationalism and political militancy.<sup>32</sup> These organisations, alongside the development of suffragist and labour associations, were critical in developing Irish women's political consciousness. From the 1910s onwards, Inghinidhe activists became more involved in revolutionary nationalism through organisations such as the republican political party Sinn Féin, the socialist Irish Citizen's Army (ICA), and the republican women's organisation Cumann na mBan.<sup>33</sup> Formed in 1914, the Irish nationalist women's organisation Cumann na mBan played a key role during both the revolution and the years of republican resistance that followed an acrimonious civil war. From its inception, however, the organisation reflected the tensions within women's active participation in nationalism. Debate arose over whether they were an autonomous organisation or an auxiliary to the anti-colonial, republican Irish Volunteers; if they could support both nationalism and feminism; and finally, if their active political engagement reflected the creation of a new, egalitarian gendered order or if their involvement was simply an expansion of their domestic role into the public sphere.<sup>34</sup> Further to this, women's active participation also posed a problem for male-dominated groups such as the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Republican Brotherhood, whose approach to women's inclusion was contradictory and grounded in symbolism, rather than actual support.<sup>35</sup> Following the December Convention in 1914, Cumann na mBan radicalised into an explicitly separatist movement, and they began training in military and quasi-military activities, including first aid, drilling, and rifle practice, as well as taking on an active role in fundraising and producing propaganda for the nationalist movement.<sup>36</sup> This training would be applied on Easter Monday, 1916, and it enabled women to participate as militants throughout the entirety of the revolutionary period.

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<sup>32</sup> Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, p. 7; Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> Pašeta, p. 147.

<sup>34</sup> Answering these questions was complicated, and in any case, there was little consensus within Cumann na mBan over these concerns. The debates within Irish nationalist feminism have been thoroughly analysed in: Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, pp. 94-9; Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, pp. 136-44; Louise Ryan, 'Tradition and Double Moral Standards: The Irish Suffragists' Critique of Nationalism', *Women's History Review*, 4.4 (1995), 487-503; Dana Hearne, 'The Irish Citizen (1914-1916): Nationalism, Feminism, and Militarism', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 18.1 (1992), 1-14.

<sup>35</sup> Pašeta, pp. 129-30.

<sup>36</sup> Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, pp. 99-102; Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish Revolution* (Cork: Collins Press, 2007), p. 47. Pašeta has noted, however, that access and training with weaponry was not universal across all branches of Cumann na mBan, Pašeta, pp. 159-62.

The Easter Rising, a five-day long insurrection lasting from the 24<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1916, was a military failure that served more as a performative gesture of sacrificial violence than a serious challenge to British rule in Ireland.<sup>37</sup> It was a chaotic venture: military orders were leaked to the public and contradictory counter-orders soon followed, the ship carrying promised German weaponry needed to arm the rebels sank in the Irish Sea, and initial plans to mobilise on the Sunday collapsed.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, it proved to be the catalyst that sparked a widespread revolutionary movement. Women were directly involved in the planning and preparation for the rebellion and between 180 to 300 women participated directly in the insurrection.<sup>39</sup> This participation took many forms, with some active in the fighting, while others provided first aid and couriered messages around the city, or maintained domestic order at the garrisons.<sup>40</sup> This mobilisation was, however, unequal. Organisations such as the ICA encouraged equal participation amongst both its male and female members, while some Cumann na mBan women had to move between different garrisons as some outposts, most notably Boland's Mill where future Irish President Eamon de Valera held control, refused to allow them entry because of their gender.<sup>41</sup> After days of fighting, the Irish rebels surrendered. Mass arrests followed the Rising: 77 women were interned in Richmond Barracks while 16 men were executed for their role in the rebellion, a decision that would transform the course of Irish history.<sup>42</sup>

In the years following the Rising, it was women who 'kept the spirit alive... and the flag flying'.<sup>43</sup> Their resistance against the British state took multiple forms: fundraising and political activism designed to provide aid for the dependants of those involved in the Rising, propaganda to consolidate the support of the Irish people, organising prisoner's welfare campaigns, and political activism galvanised by the granting of women's suffrage in 1918.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, women also played a key role in the guerrilla warfare of the War of

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<sup>37</sup> Foster, *Vivid Faces*, p. xvi.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Townsend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 134-9.

<sup>39</sup> Pašeta, pp. 171-3. Pašeta argued that 180 women, made up of members of the Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan, were active in the Rising, while Mary McAuliffe argued it was closer to 300. Pašeta, p. 170; Mary McAuliffe et al, 'Forgetting and Remembering- Uncovering Women's Histories at Richmond Barracks: A Public History Project', *Studies in Arts and Humanities*, 2.1 (2016), 17-32, p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> Sinéad McCoole, *Guns and Chiffon: Women Revolutionaries and Kilmainham Gaol* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1997), pp. 15-28; Lisa Weihman, 'Doing My Bit for Ireland: Transgressing Gender in the Easter Rising', *Éire-Ireland*, 39.3 (2004), 228-49, pp. 229-30.

<sup>41</sup> Pašeta, p. 181.

<sup>42</sup> McAuliffe et al, 'Forgetting and Remembering', p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 123.

<sup>44</sup> Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéis, 'The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion in Ireland, 1916-1918', *Historical Journal*, 55.3 (2012), 705-29; Sinéad McCoole, *No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2003); Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 118-27.

Independence (1919-1921), as they engaged in intelligence work, gunrunning, and providing safe houses.<sup>45</sup> John Borgonovo describes them as an invisible army facilitating the direct combat of the IRA.<sup>46</sup> While this apparent invisibility allowed them to avoid the mass internment and arrests their male counterparts faced, women were still subjected to gender-based violence and sexualised punishment.<sup>47</sup>

In 1922, the Irish Dáil Éireann declared the end of the War of Independence by ratifying the Anglo-Irish Treaty, a document that would subsequently incite the Irish Civil War (1922-1923).<sup>48</sup> The Treaty established a 26-county Irish Free State within the British Commonwealth, terms that went against the initial demands established during the Easter Rising. The Irish nationalist movement split into the pro-Treaty Free State Army and the anti-Treaty IRA or 'Irregulars'. Cumann na mBan likewise split, with the majority of women supporting the anti-Treaty IRA and a minority forming Cumann na Saoirse.<sup>49</sup> Cumann na mBan was the first organisation to reject the Treaty. They mobilised alongside the anti-Treaty IRA in the Battle of Dublin in June 1922, and they attempted to rally opposition against the Treaty throughout the war.<sup>50</sup> As in the War of Independence, the anti-Treaty IRA used guerrilla warfare tactics against the Free State Army, though against their former comrades, these tactics were less successful.<sup>51</sup> Women's militant participation was more visible during the Civil War: Cumann na mBan openly marched on the streets and participated in Republican funerals for propaganda purposes, while the Irish Free State directly targeted women with mass arrests and internment.<sup>52</sup> While women's militancy had been tolerated in the earlier years of the revolutionary period, during the Civil War the state, the Catholic Church, and the press developed a campaign of harassment that framed militant women as dangerous, deviant and

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<sup>45</sup> Margaret Ward, 'Marginality and Militancy: Cumann na mBan, 1914-36' in *The Irish Women's History Reader*, ed. by Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 58-64.

<sup>46</sup> John Borgonovo, 'Cumann na mBan, Martial Women and the Irish Civil War, 1922-1923' in *Women and the Irish Revolution*, ed. by Linda Connolly (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2020), pp. 68-84 (p. 70).

<sup>47</sup> Linda Connolly, 'Towards a Further Understanding of the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Women Experienced in the Irish Revolution', in *Women and the Irish Revolution*, ed. by Linda Connolly (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2020), pp. 103-28.

<sup>48</sup> For more on the Irish Civil War see: Gemma Clark, *Everyday Violence in the Irish Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Mary McAuliffe, "An idea has gone abroad that all the women were against the Treaty": Cumann na Saoirse and Pro-Treaty Women, 1922-1923' in *The Treaty: Debating and Establishing the Irish State*, ed. by Liam Weeks and Mícheál O'Fathartaigh (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2018), pp. 160-83.

<sup>50</sup> Borgonovo, pp. 75-6; Jason Knirck, 'Ghosts and Realities: Female T.Ds and the Treaty Debate', *Éire-Ireland*, 32.4 (1997), 170-94.

<sup>51</sup> Clark, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Louise Ryan, "Furies" and "Die-Hards": Women and Irish Republicanism in the Early Twentieth Century', *Gender and History*, 11.2 (1999), 256-75; Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press: Embodiment the Nation* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), p. 205; Laura McAttackney, 'Gender, Incarceration, and Power Relations during the Irish Civil War (1922-1923)', in *Gender Violence in Peace and War: States of Complicity*, ed. by Victoria Sanford, Katerina Stefatos, and Cecilia M Salvi (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016), pp. 47-63.

disorderly.<sup>53</sup> This campaign of condemnation would be repeated by the Spanish Nationalists against Republican militiawomen during and after the Spanish Civil War.

Thirteen years after Irish republican women were forced to accept surrender against the Irish Free State, women once again broke the gendered conventions of war through their active participation in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). The Spanish Civil War was sparked by a military coup led by the far-right Nationalists against the Spanish Second Republic on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936. The failure of this coup led to a bloody, three-year long civil war between the Nationalists and the Republicans, a fractured partnership of socialists, communists, trade unionists, anarcho-syndicalists, and Catalan and Basque nationalists. Established in 1931, the democratic Second Republic was first made up of a coalition of leftist and centrist parties who embarked on a process of modernising reform, which included significant efforts to improve women's civil and political liberties, though translating this into social practice was more complex.<sup>54</sup> Across socialist, communist and anarchist political movements, women's organisations rose in prominence, and, as in Ireland, these organisations allowed women to engage in social and political activism that pre-empted their later militancy during conflict.<sup>55</sup> However, elections in 1933 were won by a conservative, Catholic coalition that dismantled many of the Republic's initial reforms.<sup>56</sup> This, alongside the violent repression of the 1934 miners' uprising in Asturias, united the fractious Spanish political left under a Popular Front electoral pact that succeeded in winning the 1936 election.<sup>57</sup> Domestic tensions flared up after this victory; far right political groups such as the Falangists, the Catholic conservatives, and the military were further radicalised by proposed land reforms, reorganisation of military structure and pay, and policies of secularization.<sup>58</sup>

The attempted coup galvanised a revolutionary process that saw leftist women become active political agents against fascism. Across Spain, popular resistance arose in response to

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<sup>53</sup> Louise Ryan, 'Furies and Die-Hards', p. 258.

<sup>54</sup> Ana Aguado, 'Entre lo Pùblico y lo Privado: Sufragio y Divorcio en la Segunda Repùblica', *Ayer*, 60.4 (2005), 105-34, pp. 106-8. Frances Lannon, 'Gender and Change: Identity and Reform in the Second Republic', in *A Companion to Spanish Women's Studies*, ed. by Xon de Ros and Geraldine Hazbun (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2011), pp. 273-86; Mónica Moreno Seco, 'Republican and Republica en la Guerra Civil: Encuentros y Desencuentros', *Ayer*, 60.4 (2005), 165-95.

<sup>55</sup> Ana Aguado, 'Citizenship and Gender Equality in the Second Spanish Republic: Representations and Practices in Socialist Culture (1931-1936)', *Contemporary European History*, 23.1 (2014), 95-113; Martha Ackelsberg, *Free Women of Spain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 61-88; Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization* (Denver: Arden Press, 1995), pp. 33-41.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Preston, 'The Moderate Right and the Undermining of the Second Republic in Spain, 1931-1933', *European History Quarterly*, 3.4 (1973), 369-94.

<sup>57</sup> Helen Graham and Paul Preston, *The Popular Front in Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 84-130.

<sup>58</sup> Casanova, pp. 143-9.

the attempted coup, and in cities such as Barcelona, Madrid and Valencia, collaborations between the various political factions who remained loyal to the Spanish Republic prevented the military takeover by declaring a general strike and mobilising within militias.<sup>59</sup> In a parallel to women's mobilisation during the Irish Easter Rising, Spanish women were embedded within this popular resistance. As this military uprising erupted into civil war, women continued to mobilise and participate actively in the war effort as they took up arms, couriered messages and orders, provided medical care, and performed auxiliary duties in what they saw as an extension of their role in political and syndicalist movements.<sup>60</sup> Women's political organisations such as the anarchist *Mujeres Libres*, the communist *Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas* (AMA) and the Female Secretariat of the Marxist *Partido Obrero de la Unificación Marxista* (POUM) drove the popular mobilisation of women to the anti-fascist cause throughout the war, as well as organising initiatives designed to develop women's political consciousness and action.<sup>61</sup>

Whilst popular memory has focused on the enlistment of women into frontline combat, a parallel that can also be seen within the hypervisibility of militarised women militants within Irish cultural memory of the Easter Rising, Spanish women's militancy took multiple forms during the civil war, including political organisation, maintaining community and social infrastructures, combat support, and munitions and industrial work.<sup>62</sup> In addition, between July 1936 and March 1937, between 200 and 3200 women enlisted into militias and engaged in frontline combat.<sup>63</sup> While Irish women were regarded as an invisible army, the image of the Spanish militiawoman immediately became a figure of fascination both in Spain and internationally.<sup>64</sup> They were widely photographed and made into symbols; a process that has

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<sup>59</sup> Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War*, pp. 91-5; Casanova, p. 153.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Nash, 'Women in War: *Milicianas* and Armed Combat in Revolutionary Spain, 1936-1939', *The International History Review*, 15.2 (1993), 269-82, p. 274.

<sup>61</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, p. 63. The AMA was theoretically non-partisan and contained members from Republican, socialist, and Catholic Basque nationalists but internal documents of the AMA show its close links with the Spanish Communist Party. The intense political rivalry and disunity between these groups reflected the political and ideological rifts that characterised the Republican Popular Front. For more on the programme of the *Mujeres Libres*, see Ackelsberg, pp. 147-75.

<sup>62</sup> Ackelsberg, pp. 87-97. By militarised Irish women, I refer to the popular depiction of the Irish revolutionary Constance Markievicz, a political radical infamous for her active role in armed combat during the Easter Rising, whose mythologisation within Irish nationalist memory is discussed throughout Chapter 2 and Chapter 5.

<sup>63</sup> The estimates for how many women engaged in combat vary widely between different authors, reflecting the impact of the post-war repression on militant women. Mary Nash estimated that around 200 women actively fought on the frontlines, while Lisa Lines challenged this and argued it was closer to 1000. Most recently, Gonzalo Berger and Tania Balló have engaged in a substantive re-evaluation of women's militancy during the Spanish Civil War, and they argue that the number is closer to 3,200. Nash, 'Women in War', p. 275; Lisa Lines, *Milicianas: Women in Combat in the Spanish Civil War* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), pp. 56-8; Gonzalo Berger and Tania Balló, *Les Combatents: La Història Oblidada de Les Milicianes Antifeixistes* (Barcelona: Rosa Dals Vents, 2021).

<sup>64</sup> Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 78.

led some historians such as Mary Nash to claim that their prominence within the visual culture of the front was a reflection of their propagandistic value rather than a representation of their role in the social revolution that erupted alongside the outbreak of war.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, while women were active participants in war, their presence, like that of Irish militant women in the Irish revolutionary period, was not fully tolerated or understood. Nationalist propaganda campaigns used the presence of militiawomen on the frontlines to challenge the legitimacy and masculinity of the Republic, arguing that this non-conformity with the patriarchal order represented a corruption of Spanish values. In response to this, alongside the political drive to reorganise the disparate collection of militias into a regular, professionalised army, recruitment of women into combat units was halted, and in the spring of 1937, they were ordered to withdraw from the front.<sup>66</sup> Away from the front, they continued to be integral in the Republican war effort, however, the defeat of the Republic in April 1939 hampered women's newfound political agency and public participation.<sup>67</sup>

As this contextualisation of women's roles in the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War demonstrate, there are clear parallels between how women were mobilised in both conflicts, and how the narratives surrounding their militancy shifted as the war escalated. They were continually redefined in shifting conceptualisations of wartime femininity, and recognition of their militancy derived not from the significance of their participation, but how well it fit with burgeoning state narratives of war. Beyond this, there are further similarities in how militant women fared in the aftermath of war. As part of their demobilisation, militant women were explicitly silenced and marginalised from mainstream narratives of the conflicts; a silencing that remains prescient today as these conflicts continue to be referred to as fratricidal, a framing that implicitly elides women's participation.<sup>68</sup> In post-conflict Ireland and Spain, the consolidation and legitimisation of the new nation necessitated the re-establishment of a patriarchal gendered order.<sup>69</sup> The Irish Free State (1922-1937) and

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<sup>65</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, p. 105.

<sup>66</sup> Lines, *Milicianas*, p. 134.

<sup>67</sup> Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War*, p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Paloma Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*, trans. by Mark Oakley (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

<sup>69</sup> Louise Ryan, "Furies" and "Die-hards", p. 257; Graham, *The Spanish Republic At War*, p. 29. For more on the gender ideologies of the Irish Free State, and the subsequent Republic of Ireland, and Francoist Spain see: Caitríona Beaumont, 'Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1948', *Women's History Review*, 6.4 (1997), 563-85; Mary Ann Valiulis, 'The Politics of Gender in the Irish Free State', *Women's History Review*, 20.4 (2011), 569-78; Mercedes Carbayo-Abengo, 'Shaping Women: National Identity through the Use of Language in Franco's Spain', *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.1 (2001), 75-92; Inmaculada Blasco Herranz, 'Género y Franquismo: un Balance Historiográfico' in *El Franquismo en Canarias: Actas del Encuentro de Historia sobre el Franquismo en Canarias*, ed. by Aarón León Álvarez (Madrid: CSIC, 2014), pp. 69-88

the Francoist dictatorship (1939-1975) embedded biologically essentialist, Catholic ideologies of gender into the political fabric of the new state: women were valued for their potential to be wives and mothers, and they were obliged to return to the domestic sphere.<sup>70</sup> Those who refused to conform to Catholic gender norms were stigmatised and punished.<sup>71</sup> Irish and Spanish militant women were particularly targeted under this approach, as the silencing and repression of militant women was a key tactic in controlling public narratives of war.<sup>72</sup> The exclusion of women's experiences of war, and the ways they resisted this, is a parallel that I aim to bring into sharper focus throughout this thesis.

The first step in dismantling patriarchal narratives of war is to look at war through women's eyes and make both the female participants of war, and the gendered impacts of war, visible.<sup>73</sup> The wealth of pioneering, feminist scholarship on war in Ireland and Spain has undoubtedly achieved this through shedding new light on women's experiences of war. However, this section illustrates one of the key themes of this thesis: what does it mean to *make* women visible in narratives of war? In spite of the substantive research on women's participation in war, they remain marginalised within mainstream academic and public narratives of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War.<sup>74</sup> Thus, we must move beyond re-locating women and instead interrogate how they have been remembered within the cultural memory of war in Ireland and Spain, and how these processes of remembrance are entangled with their erasure. Through this, I argue that we can continue the work of

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<sup>70</sup> María Amor, 'Construcciones de la Subjetividad Femenina en Regímenes Nacionalistas: Los Casos de España e Irlanda', *Arenal*, 16.1 (2009), 151-71; Beaumont, 'Women, Citizenship and Catholicism'; Sofía Rodríguez López, 'Corpus Delicti; Social Imaginaries of Gendered Violence', in *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, ed. by Aurora Morcillo (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 359-400; Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 52-64.

<sup>71</sup> Siobhra Aiken, 'Sick on the Irish Sea, Dancing Across the Atlantic: (Anti-)Nostalgia in Women's Diasporic Remembrance of the Irish Revolution' in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*, ed. by Oona Frawley (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2021) pp. 88-107, (p. 91); Una Crowley and Rob Kitchin, 'Producing "Decent Girls": Governmentality and the Moral Geographies of Sexual Conduct in Ireland (1922-1937)', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 15.4 (2008), 355-72; Michael Richards, 'Morality and Biology in the Spanish Civil War: Psychiatrists, Revolution and Women Prisoners in Malaga', *Contemporary European History*, 10.3 (2001), 395-421.

<sup>72</sup> Within feminist histories of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, examinations of the gendered legacies of conflict have developed into a rich subfield. Some notable examples of this include: Mary Ann Valiulis, 'The Politics of Gender'; Jennifer Yeager and Jonathon Culleton, 'Gendered Violence and Cultural Forgetting: The Case of the Irish Magdalenes', *Radical History Review*, 126 (2016), 134-46; Louise Ryan, "In the Line of Fire": Representations of Women and War (1919-1923) through the Writings of Republican Men' in *Irish Women and Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags*, ed. by Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004), pp. 45-61; Gina Herrmann, 'Voices of the Vanquished: Leftist Women and the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 4.1 (2003), 11-29. Pura Sánchez, *Individuas de Dudosa Moral* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2009); Raquel Osborne, *Mujeres Bajo Sospecha: Memoria y Sexualidad 1930-1980* (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 2012); Lorraine Ryan, 'The Sins of the Father: the Destruction of the Republican Family in Franco's Spain', *The History of the Family*, 14.3 (2009), 245-52.

<sup>73</sup> Thébaud, p. 155.

<sup>74</sup> Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution*, pp. 5-6; Martínez López and Nash, p. 40.

dismantling patriarchal narratives of war and building new understandings of conflict in Ireland and Spain. In the following sections of this introduction, I address how expanding our approach to gender and war in Ireland and Spain can address these issues; firstly, through redefining women's militancy, and secondly, through widening the source basis used to understand how women participated in war; namely by integrating critical analysis of women's photographic practices into our analysis.

## 1.2 Redefining Women's Militancy

Historicising women's participation in the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War shows the multitudinous nature of women's engagement with war and warfare, which challenges the construction of war as the locus of 'true manhood'.<sup>75</sup> Yet, in cultural memory of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, this radical diversity of women's participation is erased within the construction of a war narrative that upholds the heroic figure of the male soldier, and the militarised masculinity that he represents.<sup>76</sup> By this, I refer to militarism as the ideology underpinning the mobilisation of society during war, which glorifies practices associated with the military and is shaped by the patriarchy and martial constructions of masculinity.<sup>77</sup> Within these narratives of war in Ireland and Spain, militancy is defined within this doctrine of militarism, and women's presence becomes a site of tension. As Joanna Bourke has argued, women's presence in war threatens the linkage between masculinity and warfare, and to acknowledge women's participation and contributions 'symbolically castrates the armed forces'.<sup>78</sup> To prevent this slippage and to reconstruct the patriarchal gendered order in the aftermath of conflict, these cultural narratives of war reframed women's participation as either support to male soldiers or as a violent aberration. Both of these framings remove the nuance and complexity from women's militancy, and furthermore, reinforce a construction of militancy that frames combat as the apex of participation in war.

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<sup>75</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Swati Parashar, *Women and Militant Wars: The Politics of Injury* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. 24. Parashar argues that collective memory is critical to maintaining gendered narratives of war that legitimise male experiences of war while marginalising women's experiences. In this sense, she argues that memory, or remembrance, becomes a tool of political erasure.

<sup>77</sup> Anuradha M. Chenoy, 'Militarization, Conflict and Women in South Asia' in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. by Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 101-10, (pp. 101).

<sup>78</sup> Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999), p. 341.

In order to redress the erasure embedded within these cultural narratives of war, it is critical to redefine women's militancy outside of patriarchal frameworks of war. While the term 'militant' was not explicitly applied to Irish and Spanish women active in war—with their epitaphs ranging from their own descriptions of revolutionaries and soldiers, to being dismissively referred to as girls and adventure-seekers by their comrades, to being demonised as furies, die-hards, bloodthirsty locusts, and unnatural women by their opponents—this term allows me to encompass the variety of ways in which women described themselves and their participation during conflict. By adopting a feminist definition of militancy, this thesis challenges the construction of hierarchies around participation in conflict, which glorifies combat and other actions traditionally associated with male soldiers. Instead, I position women's militancy as a fluid spectrum of activities that encompass active combat on the frontlines of war to political mobilisation and domestic activism on the homefront. Feminist historians of war have argued that cultural representations of women's militancy have often focused on spectacular actions that disrupt normative gendered ideologies, while the 'countless mundane, repetitive, everyday tasks' of resistance are devalued and forgotten.<sup>79</sup> As Senia Pašeta has argued, 'making tea and sandwiches was hardly a revolutionary act, but making tea and sandwiches in the midst of an armed revolt...was by default a highly subversive and radical act'.<sup>80</sup> By redefining Irish and Spanish women's militancy as a fluid spectrum of practices, I highlight how patriarchal narratives of war have been used to erase women's multi-faceted roles in conflict and its aftermath, and how challenging these narratives can enrich our understanding of gender and war.

In taking this approach, I am inspired by the previous research of feminist scholars on women's militancy in war, revolution, and political movements.<sup>81</sup> Within feminist scholarship, militancy—defined by Katharina Karcher as the 'resolute commitment to a political or social cause coupled with the willingness to use confrontational or violent methods to support the cause'—has been embraced for its fluidity, and it has been used to encompass actions from women's political violence to intimidating public behaviour to constitutional protest.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Margaret Collins Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance: how Women Fought to Free France, 1940-1945* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1995), pp. vii; Joan Schwartz, 'Redefining Resistance: Women's Activism in Wartime France' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. by Margaret R. Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 141-53, (pp. 141-4).

<sup>80</sup> Pašeta, p. 182.

<sup>81</sup> For example: Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You*; Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores* (London: Zed Books, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> Katharina Karcher and Sarah Colvin, *Gender, Emancipation, and Political Violence: Rethinking the Legacy of 1968* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), p. 7. See also: Katharina Karcher, 'Sisters in Arms?: Militant Feminisms in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1968' (New York: Berghahn, 2017), pp. 7-11.

Feminist histories of the suffrage movement have been particularly important to re-conceptualising militancy outside of militaristic, masculinised frameworks.<sup>83</sup> In her analysis of the British women's suffrage movement, Laura Mayhall criticised the reductive conceptualisations of militancy in this field to the 'limited set of practices enacted by... the WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union)'.<sup>84</sup> Within this framework, militant action was defined as violence against property and physical force, while the importance and impact of other modes of protest such as passive resistance and constitutional activism were diminished. To encompass the diverse, and often contradictory, ways in which women participated in conflict, Mayhall argued it was critical to re-conceptualise militancy as a set of practices along a constantly evolving continuum, and to embrace the fluidity generated by this definition.<sup>85</sup>

Framing women's militancy within a fluid continuum of diverse practices has also been key to situating militant women within a global, if uneven, history of women as participants in conflict. Sandea Via has argued that war relies on patriarchal structures and hierarchies of gender, and this domination of masculine values and norms obscured the roles, and crucially the agency, of female participants in war.<sup>86</sup> Historicising women's militancy within a global context inclusive of different forms of conflict, such as ethno-religious violence, total war, and anti-colonial revolutionary movements, has been critical in re-locating women's roles in war and in understanding how their participation is excluded.<sup>87</sup> Swati Parashar's work on Kashmiri and Sri Lankan women's militancy, for example, traces the history of women's involvement in armed militant movements and she demonstrated that it allowed women to realise their agency in new forms of resistance.<sup>88</sup> Yet, the multiplicity of women's militancy proved to be the basis for their erasure from both narratives of war and post-conflict peace processes, as

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<sup>83</sup> For example: Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'Divided sisterhood? Nationalist feminism and feminist militancy in England and Ireland', *Contemporary British History*, 32:4 (2018), 448-69; Laura Mayhall, 'Defining Militancy: Radical Protest, the Constitutional Idiom and Women's Suffrage in Britain, 1908-1909' in *Journal of British Studies*, 39:3 (2000), 340-71; Katharina Karcher, '"Deeds not words!" A comparative analysis of feminist militancy in pre- and post-1968 Europe' in *Gender, Emancipation, and Political Violence: Rethinking the Legacy of 1968*, ed. by Katharina Karcher and Sarah Colvin (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 30-45; Belinda Southard, 'Militancy, power, and identity: the Silent Sentinels as women fighting for political voice', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 10:3 (2007), 399-417.

<sup>84</sup> Mayhall, p.341.

<sup>85</sup> Mayhall, p. 370; Karcher, *Sisters in Arms*, p. 11.

<sup>86</sup> Sandra Via, 'Gender, Militarism, and Globalization: Soldiers for Hire and Hegemonic Masculinity' in *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives*, ed. by Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2020), pp. 42-55, (p. 42).

<sup>87</sup> Examples of this research on militancy in a global context include: Swati Parashar, 'Women in militant movements: (un)comfortable silences and discursive Strategies', in *Making Gender, Making War: Violence, Military and Peacekeeping Practices*, ed. by Annica Kronsell and Erika Svedberg, (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 166-81; Seema Shekhawat, *Female Combatants in Conflict and Peace: Challenging Gender in Violence and Post-Conflict Reintegration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Matthew Kovac, ' "Red Amazons"? Gendering violence and revolution in the long First World War, 1914-23', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20:4 (2019), 69-82.

<sup>88</sup> Swati Parashar, 'Gender, Jihad, and Jingoism: Women as Perpetrators, Planners, and Patrons of Militancy in Kashmir' in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 34:4 (2011), 295-317, pp. 311-2.

the dominance of masculine-coded militarism devalued their participation. Through locating Irish and Spanish women's militancy within this global history, from which they have often been overlooked, my research adds further nuance to these narratives of silencing discussed within the global histories of militant women, particularly as I highlight the continuity of this erasure and women's resistance towards this during conflict and the aftermath of war.

Through positioning women's militancy within spectrum encompassing participation in conflict across both the frontlines and the home, we encounter two complex issues that resonate and intersect throughout this thesis. The first is the question of how combative and non-violent militant women are remembered, and the second is the complex status of women's violence within the feminist political and historical landscape. The question of feminist remembrance is complex; the adage that 'well-behaved women rarely make history' encapsulates some of the complexities and contradictions found within the issue of remembering militant women. This phrase has now been widely adopted as a signifier of the need for women to break boundaries and norms in order to be remembered, yet it was originally a critique of this tendency to focus on spectacular women at the expense of those who conformed to gender and societal norms.<sup>89</sup>

As I discuss throughout this thesis, the question of how Irish and Spanish militant women were remembered within cultural narratives of conflict is complex and often contradictory. The social and cultural dominance of traditional models of womanhood, enshrined particularly within the Catholicised ideal of femininity reinforced in post-conflict Ireland and Spain, eschewed female combatants as anathema to womanhood. As such, remembrance in the immediate post-conflict period often centred on reframing women's militancy within domestic, and pacifistic, standards. The representation of the Irish revolutionary Constance Markievicz as figure of feminine philanthropy, rather than as a gun-wielding rebel, in the Irish Free State highlights how unease and anxiety surrounding women's violence elided crucial aspects of their militancy.<sup>90</sup> This unease also echoes within contemporary cultural narratives of war in Ireland and Spain, where women's agency and direct participation in violence is seen as part of a contentious legacy of the past that should not be celebrated or embraced, in comparison to the wider acceptance and remembrance of male violence in war. Simultaneously, however, militant women who engaged in pacifistic or supportive modes of engagement are often neglected within more modern modes of

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<sup>89</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, 'Why Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History', *BYU Studies Quarterly*, 59:3 (2020), 197-203, p. 200.

<sup>90</sup> Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Vera Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 31-3. I discuss the domestication of militant women further in Chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis.

remembrance centring on spectacular acts of combat and the mythologisation of the ‘warrior woman’. As I discuss later in this thesis, this focus on framing individual militants as exceptional women reinforces a singular, militaristic definition of militancy, and it ignores how these women often engaged in a variety of militant practices, both combative and non-combative. Certainly, it is crucial to recognise how combative militants defied the gendered nature of combat, but it is important that we do not use the remembrance of these women as a way to perpetuate a hierarchy of militancy. By disrupting this dichotomy of remembrance through this re-definition of women’s militancy, my aim is that this work forges towards what Sharon Crozier-De Rosa has described as an ethical remembrance of militant women that centres their agency, resistance, and complexity over idealised representations.<sup>91</sup>

The complexity of the remembrance and representation of women’s militancy also prompts the need to critically analyse wider questions surrounding violent women in feminist history and scholarship. Patricia Melzer has argued that feminist militancy is frequently not historicised as part of feminist politics due to the unease and hesitancy surrounding women’s deliberate use of violence, a factor that contributes to the unevenness in how militant women are remembered within cultural narratives of war.<sup>92</sup> In the early twentieth century, and even today, femininity was characterised as innately peaceful with women regarded as the pacifistic sex; a factor that made their deliberate violence shocking and abhorrent to the public.<sup>93</sup> This gendered ideology of pacifistic femininity was one shared by both anti-feminists and many within the early feminist movement, as Sharon Crozier-De Rosa has noted in her research on feminist violence and suffrage.<sup>94</sup> In tracing the historical context of women’s violence in the British suffrage movement, she highlights the need for a new approach and understanding of a feminist ethics of violence, which not only acknowledges women as agents of violence, but which also investigates the reluctance of feminist scholarship to address violence as feminist praxis.<sup>95</sup> Locating violence within the fluid continuum of practices of women’s militancy is critical to expanding our understanding and disrupting patriarchal narratives of war. In conflict, protest, and revolutionary movements, women’s violent and non-violent militancy operated in tandem—women’s violence challenged

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<sup>91</sup> Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Vera Mackie, ‘Mobilising affect and trauma: the politics of gendered memory and gendered silence’, *Women’s History Review*, (2022).

<sup>92</sup> Patricia Melzer, “‘Women of Peace’ we are not”: feminist militants in the West German *Autonomen* and the women’s movement’, *German Studies Review*, 40:2 (2017), 313-32, pp. 327.

<sup>93</sup> Caron Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, ‘Female terrorism and militancy’ in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 161-72, (p. 166).

<sup>94</sup> Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 197-9.

<sup>95</sup> Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, p. 199.

traditional ideologies of gender and femininity, while women's use of nonviolent protest and actions, particularly in the context of a militarised society, marked their resistance patriarchal ideologies of militarism. Rather than reinforcing a dichotomy, we should instead recognise that the 'emancipatory potential of nonviolence stands alongside the subversive potential of women's political violence'.<sup>96</sup>

In addition to drawing on feminist scholarship of militancy, this reframing of women's participation in conflict develops and expands current scholarly work in both fields of Irish and Spanish gender history. Feminist historians and archivists within Irish studies have sought to broaden our understandings of both women's participation in the Irish revolutionary period and to recognise women's militancy outside of the structures of militarised masculinity that dominate definitions of conflict.<sup>97</sup> As discussed earlier, women's active participation in warfare disturbed the gendered dynamics of Irish nationalism. In the early twentieth century, Irish nationalism was predicated on a gendered ideology that established women as the cultural and biological reproducers of the nation in contrast to men, who were to be heroic soldiers fighting for independence.<sup>98</sup> The revolutionary period, however, offered women an opportunity to rupture this binary framework, and they did so by engaging in warfare across both the domestic sphere and public spheres.<sup>99</sup> Using newly available archival documents such as women's witness statements and applications for military pensions, historians such as Eve Morrison have traced how women recorded their own participation in war, a framework that revealed the wide scope of activities they undertook from intelligence work to couriering ammunition between different battalions.<sup>100</sup> Women's militant participation intensified during the guerrilla warfare of the War of Independence (1919-21) and the Civil War (1922-3). Their homes became battlefronts as they ran safe houses and protected arms dumps in the homes, but also because their homes became a space of 'gendered violation and terror' due to army raids.<sup>101</sup> In approaching women's militancy

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<sup>96</sup> Colvin and Karcher, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> Connolly, *Women and the Irish Revolution*, p. 6; Oona Frawley, *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021). This has also been a feature of wider gendered histories of Ireland, including for example re-examinations of women's roles in the First World War in Fionnuala Walsh, *Irish Women and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>98</sup> Geraldine Meaney, *Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics* (Dublin: Attic Press, 1991). For more on gendering nationalism, see: Nira Yuval Davis, 'Gender and Nation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16.4 (1993), 621-632 and Anne McClintock, 'Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family', *Feminist Review*, 44 (1993), 61-79.

<sup>99</sup> Ryan, "Furies" and "Die-Hards", pp. 262-5.

<sup>100</sup> Eve Morrison, 'The Bureau of Military History and Female Republican Activism', in *Gender and Power in Irish History*, ed. by Mary Ann Valiulis (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), pp. 59-83, (pp. 60-3).

<sup>101</sup> Mary McAuliffe, 'The Homefront as Battlefront: Women, Violence and the Domestic Space during War in Ireland, 1919-1921' in *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Activism, Violence*, ed. by Linda Connolly (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2020), pp. 164-82, (p. 168).

from a new perspective, this new wave of feminist research not only highlights how women participated in war, including the traumatic legacies of gendered violence they faced for their role, it also addresses how their participation was delegitimised and erased.

After the civil war, the victorious Irish Free State actively dismissed women's participation in the revolution as part of a concerted effort to restore the patriarchal order. Women's participation as combatants and political activists was omitted from the Irish revolutionary narrative, while their domestic activism was reframed as an expression of the nurturing nature of Irish womanhood, rather than an example of political agency.<sup>102</sup> This erasure was institutionalised in the mechanisms of the state. For example, the Military Service Pension Act (1924) actively excluded applications from women, and it was only in 1932 that Cumann na mBan was included in the list of eligible organisations.<sup>103</sup> Even then, the definition of active service was built around male experiences of war, with the majority of women's applications rejected.<sup>104</sup> Women who continued to participate publicly in republican activism were smeared in the press and public discourse as deranged, unfeminine 'furies'.<sup>105</sup> Despite this, women's militancy did not cease, as they continued their political activism, fundraising and political campaigning, both in Ireland and abroad.<sup>106</sup> Women negotiated between expressing their political agency as 'furies' or deliberately using the auspices of Irish femininity to garner political and financial support, yet these actions continued to be dismissed by male republicans.<sup>107</sup> This negotiation demonstrates the complexity of women's engagement with war, particularly within the domestic sphere, and how often it can only be seen once outside of the limiting, masculine-coded definitions of militancy.

Whilst recent work has begun to re-conceptualise Irish women's militancy, within histories of the Spanish Civil War, women's participation remains embedded within the myth of the *militiana*, or the combative militiawoman. The dominance of this figure within the visual culture of the Spanish Civil War has produced a reductive narrative that frames active combat as the height of women's emancipation during the war—excluding the rich diversity of

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<sup>102</sup> Louise Ryan, 'In the Line of Fire', pp. 45-61; Louise Ryan, "Splendidly Silent": Representing Irish Republican women, 1919-23', in *Re-presenting the Past: Women and History*, ed. by Ann-Marie Gallagher, Cathy Lubelska and Louise Ryan (London: Pearson, 2001), pp. 23-43.

<sup>103</sup> Marie Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916-1923', *Women's History Review*, 26.6 (2017), 915-34.

<sup>104</sup> Coleman, p. 924.

<sup>105</sup> Ryan, "Furies" and "Die-Hards", p. 270.

<sup>106</sup> Hall, 'Irish Republican Women in Australia', p. 92; Siobhra Aiken, "Sinn Féin permits...in the Heels of their Shoes": Cumann na mBan Emigrants and Transatlantic Revolutionary Exchange', *Irish Historical Studies*, 44. 165 (2020), 106-30.

<sup>107</sup> Hall, 'Irish Republican Women in Australia', p. 82.

Spanish Republican women's domestic and political activism. Within gendered histories of the war, there has been a conflict between dismantling the mythic status of the militiawomen and overstating their significance. In Mary Nash's pioneering feminist work *Defying Male Civilization*, for example, she argues that, based on the limited numbers of active militiawomen, their prominence in Republican visual culture derived from their symbolic value as propagandistic symbols, rather than reflecting a significant break with Spanish gender roles.<sup>108</sup> She used this argument to justify the need for greater insight into the richness of women's collective action and political organisation during the war, yet in response historians such as Lisa Lines have refuted her dismissal of the significance of militiawomen, arguing that they were more than propaganda, and furthermore that their experiences have been systemically undermined within Spanish history.<sup>109</sup> Lines' analysis of women's writings, press reports and oral histories provided a substantive overview of women's combative militancy during war; however, both Nash and Lines underestimate the fluidity in Republican women's militancy, and how they moved in between combative and domestic roles. This dichotomous dynamic reinforces the stratification of women's participation based on masculine-coded ideals of combat, and ultimately reinforces patriarchal narratives of war.

In order to construct new narratives of war that fully engage with Spanish women's militancy, I have drawn on work challenging patriarchal definitions of participation in relation to Francoist women's activism during the Spanish Civil War and women's roles in post-war, anti-Francoist resistance.<sup>110</sup> During the civil war, Francoist women developed networks of resistance, sabotage and espionage in Republican-held cities, an aspect of women's militancy that has been obscured by the myth of the *milicianas*.<sup>111</sup> Like Irish militant women, their participation breached the boundaries of the front and the home, transgressing the rigid

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<sup>108</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, p. 105-09.

<sup>109</sup> Lines, *Milicianas*, p. 3. See also: Lisa Lines, 'Female Combatants in the Spanish Civil War: Milicianas on the Front Lines and in the Rearguard', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 10.4 (2009), 168-87.

<sup>110</sup> In taking this approach, I build on work such as: Dolores Martín Moruno and Javier Ordóñez Rodríguez, 'The Nursing Vocation as Political Participation for Women during the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 2.3 (2009), 305-19; Elena Cabazali, Matilde Cuevas and María Teresa Chicote, 'Myth as Suppression: Motherhood and the Historical Consciousness of the Women of Madrid' in *The Myths We Live By*, ed. by Raphael Samuel and Paul Richard Thompson (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 161-73; Paula de la Cruz Fernández, 'Embroidering the Nation: The Culture of Sewing and Spanish Ideologies of Domesticity' in *Memory and Cultural History of the Spanish Civil War: Realms of Oblivion*, ed. by Aurora Gómez Morcillo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 249-83.

<sup>111</sup> Sofía Rodríguez López and Antonio Cazorla Sánchez, 'Blue Angels: Female Fascist Resisters, Spies and Intelligence Officials in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-9', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 53.4 (2018), 692-713, pp. 693-6; Toni Morrant I Ariño, 'Spanish Fascist Women's Transnational Relations during the Second World War: Between Ideology and Realpolitik', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 54.4 (2019), 834-57; Julio Prada Rodríguez, '"Mujeres Contra La Revolución" La Movilización Femenina Conservadora Durante La Segunda República Española y La Guerra Civil', *Amnis: Revue de Civilisation Contemporaine de l'Université de Bretagne Occidentale*, 8 (2008), 1-9.

boundaries of gender constructed within nationalist mythologies, and after the war, the re-establishment of Catholic gendered ideologies demanded the return of these women to the home, their efforts broadly unrecognised.<sup>112</sup> Women's participation in clandestine, anti-Francoist resistance organisations provide another way of understanding the diversity of women's militancy, as these groups relied on women to construct networks of information and espionage, provide safe houses and escape routes, and maintain the infrastructure of these organisations.<sup>113</sup> These actions were a continuation of women's wartime domestic and political activism, and like their wartime participation, it was undermined within the wider, male-dominated resistance movement.<sup>114</sup> This approach to militancy reinforces the diversity of women's roles in war and resistance movements, and it also emphasises that women's militant activism was crucial to the infrastructure and operations of these organisations.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, it demonstrates the continuity of erasure during and after conflict, as the feminine associations of domestic space has been used to deny recognition to women's domestic militancy, with greater attention paid to spectacular acts of resistance over the everyday acts of rebellion and solidarity.<sup>116</sup>

Framing militancy through masculine paradigms of resistance obscures the diverse experiences of women during conflict. This erasure of women is a multi-layered process. It is enacted by the post-conflict state through official mechanisms of erasure, by the male participants in resistance organisations who delegitimise women's participation in order to maintain their own conceptions of masculinity, and by many historians who reinforce masculine-coded definitions of militancy. Building on the feminist scholarship discussed in

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<sup>112</sup> Rodríguez López and Cazorla Sánchez, p. 711-2.

<sup>113</sup> For more on anti-Francoist resistance see: Carme Molinero, 'Introducción: Mujer, Represión y Antifranquismo', *Historia Del Presente*, 2.4 (2004), 9–12; Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, 'Las Mujeres En La Resistencia Antifranquista, Un Estado de La Cuestión', *Arenal: Revista de Historia de Mujeres*, 12.1 (2005), 5–34; Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, 'Rebeldía Individual, Compromiso Familiar, Acción Colectiva: Las Mujeres En La Resistencia Al Franquismo Durante Los Años Cuarenta', *Historia Del Presente*, 4, (2004), 63–92; Sergio Rodríguez Tejada, 'Compañeras : La Militancia de Las Mujeres En El Movimiento Estudiantil Antifranquista En Valencia', *Historia del Presente*, 4 (2004), 123-46; Armando Balsebre Torroja and Rosario Fontova, 'Las Mujeres de La Pirenaica. El Primer Feminismo Antifranquista de La Radio Española', *Arenal: Revista de Historia de Mujeres*, 23.1 (2016), 85–113.

<sup>114</sup> Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, 'Hombres Armados y Mujeres Invisibles. Género y Sexualidad en la Guerrilla Antifranquista (1936-1952)', *Ayer*, 110.2 (2018), 285-310; Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, 'La Revista *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*; o la Construcción de una Identidad Femenina Comunista en el Exilio Francés', *Pandora: Revue d'études hispaniques*, 2005, 119-31.

<sup>115</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, 'Hombres Armados', pp. 288.

<sup>116</sup> Claudia Cabrero Blanco, 'Espacios Femeninos de Lucha: "Rebeldías Cotidianas" y Otras Formas de Resistencia de las Mujeres durante el Primer Franquismo (Asturias, 1937-1952)', *Historia del Presente*, 4 (2004), 31-46. See also Claudia Cabrero Blanco, 'Tejiendo las Redes de la Democracia: Resistencias Cotidianas de las Mujeres durante la Dictadura Franquista', in *Heterodoxas, Guerrilleras y Ciudadanas: Resistencias Femeninas en la España Moderna y Contemporánea*, ed. by Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo and Ignacio Peiró (Zaragoza: CSIC, 2015), pp. 197-217, (pp. 211).

this section, I will examine how women's photographic practices allowed them to articulate their militancy and construct their own counter-narratives of war and activism that challenged their erasure from mainstream narratives. Just as photography and women's engagement can disrupt male-dominated narratives of war, it can also disturb the patriarchal construction of militancy and enrich our understanding of the diverse ways in which women participated in war.

### 1.3 Photography and Narratives of War in Ireland and Spain

In Ireland and Spain, photography shaped the cultural imaginary of war, and the circulation of these photographs continues to shape the legacy of these conflicts. Images diffuse complex historical experiences and emotions into a singular moment, defining how we relate to and remember the past.<sup>117</sup> The studio portraits of the executed leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, for example, fortified a mythology of a masculine, Catholic rebellion as they were remade and recirculated throughout twentieth century Ireland. In Spain, photographs such as Robert Capa's 'The Falling Soldier' (1936) captured the incisive moments of war, transforming the viewer into a witness of the devastation of modern warfare, while also reinforcing the ideal of war as a site of heroic masculinity.<sup>118</sup> The iconic status and contemporary relevance of these images demonstrates, as Elizabeth Edwards has argued, that photographs are not only visual images, but rather socially active objects that inscribe and project certain narratives of the past.<sup>119</sup>

In twentieth-century Ireland, photography was a popular tool to shape both large-scale historical narratives and the individual lives of the Irish people.<sup>120</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising, photography was key in determining the narrative of the rebellion. The mainstream British and Irish press, addressing an audience broadly unsympathetic to the rebels, photographed the devastating impact of the rebellion on the built environment of Dublin. Using stationary viewfinders and glass plate negatives, press photographers captured

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<sup>117</sup> Robert Hariman and John Luciates, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) p. 27. For key theorists within the study of photography see: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Flamingo, 1984 [1980]). John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972); Ariela Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone, 2008); Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of the Image* (London: Routledge, 2004); Allen Sekula, 'The Body and the Archive', in *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*, ed. by R. Bolton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 342-89; Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977); John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

<sup>118</sup> Christopher Assaf and Mary Angela Bock, 'The Robert Capa Myth: Hegemonic Masculinity in Photojournalism's Professional Indoctrination', *Communication, Culture and Critique*, 15.1 (2021), 1-18, p. 10.

<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Photography and the Performance of History', *Kronos*, 27 (2001), 15-29, p. 15.

<sup>120</sup> Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, p. 6.

images of smoking ruins and rubble that evoked similar scenes of devastation from the battlefields of World War One.<sup>121</sup> Tabloid newspapers reproduced halftone photographs of studio portraits of the leaders of the Rising, crafting a sensationalist narrative of war. Yet, after the widespread executions and internments of Irish nationalists, the tide of public opinion shifted against the British state and these same photographs were remobilised in commercially-printed commemorative pamphlets and supplements in national magazines to construct a sympathetic narrative of the Easter Rising.<sup>122</sup> These remade images transformed the Easter Rising from a failed coup into a revolution. Photographic studios, such as the nationalist Keogh Brothers Studio, printed and sold numerous series of photographic memorial cards and postcards of the leaders of Rising, a tactic later used by Republican propaganda departments during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>123</sup> The material consumption and circulation of this photographic memorabilia then shaped the meaning and memory of the Rising, as it was displayed and collected by the wider Irish public.

In the latter stages of the revolutionary period, photographs functioned as weapons in the intelligence and propaganda war between the IRA and the British state.<sup>124</sup> For example, during the midst of the War of Independence, the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland used documentary photography to investigate and substantiate claims of violence committed by the British army on Irish civilians.<sup>125</sup> After the eruption of civil war in 1922, the Irish Free State employed the journalist W.D Hogan as an official state photographer, capturing the aftermath of battles and bolstering support for the new state.<sup>126</sup> The photographic practices of Irish war photography—its role as medium to imagine the new nation, disseminate political ideas, and build national mythologies—demonstrate the inception of photographic narratives of war, a process that would be fortified during the Spanish Civil War.

Described as ‘the most photogenic war anyone has ever seen’, the Spanish Civil War was the first war to be extensively photographed for a mass audience and it established the

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<sup>121</sup> Gail Baylis, ‘Boy Culture and Ireland 1916’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 13.3 (2015), 192-208, p. 201.

<sup>122</sup> Justin Carville, “Dusty Fingers of Time”: Photography, Memory and 1916’ in *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising*, ed. by Joanna Brück and Lisa Godson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 235-48, (p. 240).

<sup>123</sup> Gail Baylis, ‘Con Colbert’s Portrait: The Lives of a Photograph’, *History of Photography*, 41.1 (2017), 44-60, p. 55-9.

<sup>124</sup> Padraig Og O’Ruairc, *Revolution: A Photographic History of Revolutionary Ireland, 1913-1923* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2011), p. 12.

<sup>125</sup> Francis Carroll, *America and the Making of an Independent Ireland* (New York: New York University Press, 2021), pp. 89-110.

<sup>126</sup> Nina White, “‘Propaganda for Peace’: A Gramscian Reading of Irish and Spanish Civil War Photography”, *Estudios Irlandeses*, 16 (2021), 125-38, p. 129.

modern genre of war photojournalism.<sup>127</sup> The Spanish Civil War was a flashpoint within interwar Europe that epitomised the wider political tensions of the continent, garnering attention from international participants, civilian campaigners, and the mass media. It coincided with a shift in photographic technology; unlike the cumbersome cameras used by press photographers twenty years earlier, the small portable cameras carried by photojournalists allowed them to cut exposure times and take clearer images in low light conditions.<sup>128</sup> As such, photojournalism exploded during the conflict, and photographs from Spanish battlefronts poured into both the national and international illustrated press.<sup>129</sup> These photographs defined the conflict in the European collective imagination for decades, and redefined war photography.<sup>130</sup>

Photographs of the Spanish Civil War were not images of conflict, they were also images *in* conflict.<sup>131</sup> They were critical weapons within both Republican and Nationalist practices of warfare—in the most literal sense, aerial photographs were used as reconnaissance in preparation for battle, while propaganda posters and other memorabilia cropped, edited, and remade press photographs to further selective, political narratives of war.<sup>132</sup> Photography also served as another front in the war between the Nationalists and Republicans, who regularly edited and redefined each other's photographs. As Sebastiaan Faber has shown, Nationalist visual propaganda published during and after the war edited Republican

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<sup>127</sup> Brothers, p. 2. The British reporter Claud Cockburn described in his 1967 memoir how a former Catalan Propaganda Minister had described the war as photogenic, a term that aptly articulated the tension between the allure of war and its terrible impacts. Claud Cockburn, quoted in Laura Hartmann-Villalta, 'Witness to War: Photography, Anglophone Women's Writing and the Spanish Civil War', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Northeastern University, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>128</sup> Brothers, pp. 5-6.

<sup>129</sup> The role and development of photojournalism during the Spanish Civil War has been widely discussed, see: Lorna Arroyo, 'Fotografía, Memoria Republicana y Exilio Español: Las Imágenes que han hecho Historia', in *1939: Exilio Republicano Español*, ed. by Manuel Aznar Soler and Idola Murga Castro, (Madrid: Ministerio de Justicia, 2019), pp. 463-72; Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos, *Eyes of the World: Robert Capa, Gerda Taro and the Invention of Modern Photojournalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2017); David Deacon, *British News Media and the Spanish Civil War: Tomorrow May Be Too Late* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Katherine Stafford, 'Photojournalism and Memory: Agustí Centelles in the Transition and Today', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 91.8 (2014), 1207–27; Alicia Parras and Julia R. Cela, 'Comunicación y Memoria: El Fotoperiodismo Como Testigo de La Violencia: Fuentes Documentales de La Guerra Civil Española (1936-1939)', *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 19.1 (2014), 113–31; María Olivera Zaldua, 'War Illustrations from the *Abora* Newspaper', *Fotocinema: Revista Científica de Cine y Fotografía*, 13 92016), 87-106.

<sup>130</sup> Hanno Hardt, 'Remembering Capa, Spain and the Legacy of Gerda Taro, 1936-1937', *Hispanic Issues On Line Debates*, 3 (2011), 30-8, p. 31.

<sup>131</sup> Brothers, p. 2.

<sup>132</sup> Diego Navarro Bonilla and Guillermo Vicente Cano, 'Photographic Air Reconnaissance during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939: Doctrine and Operations', *War in History*, 20.3 (2013), 345-80. The role of photography in Spanish propaganda is discussed in: Imogen Bloomfield, 'Photographs of Child Victims in Propaganda Posters of the Spanish Civil War', *Modern Languages Open*, 1 (2018), 1-15; Miriam Basilio, *Visual Propaganda, Exhibitions, and the Spanish Civil War* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Sebastiaan Faber, *Memory Battles of the Spanish Civil War: History, Fiction, Photography* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018); Sandie Holguín, "Nationalist Spain Invites You": Battlefield Tourism during the Spanish Civil War', *American Historical Review*, 110.5 (2005), 1399-1426.

photographs, reusing these images and repositioning them as examples of barbarity by changing captions and imposing them onto montages.<sup>133</sup> Consequently, photographs cannot be understood as neutral illustrations of conflict, but as objects designed and used for political and cultural purposes.

Additionally, war photography in Ireland and Spain was crucial to shaping gendered narratives of war. Visual representations of women in iconography have often been used to symbolise wider ideals, but in becoming a symbol, the woman herself is silenced and petrified.<sup>134</sup> Across Ireland and Spain, photographs of women were used to reinscribe gendered ideologies of war, constructing them as passive actors in contrast to the agency of the male participants.<sup>135</sup> For example, across Irish press photography, women were depicted as grieving mothers and wives in order to further entrench the gendered mythos of Irish nationalism.<sup>136</sup> In Spain, while militant women were initially visualised as active participants in war, representing revolutionary change and upheaval of the traditional order, these images were quickly re-visualised and re-scripted to adhere to gendered norms of conflict. Visualisations of women in the popular Republican press instead framed women as passive victims of war or heroic mothers—a similar fate to the women that inspired these depictions, whose participation and contributions was continuously redefined within the boundaries of acceptable femininity.<sup>137</sup>

It is also important to note the cultural and technological differences between Irish and Spanish photography, as this impacted on shifts in how women's militancy was visualised and understood. For example, while photographs of militant Irish women often conformed to traditional images of womanhood, images of Spanish militant women were noticeably more

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<sup>133</sup> Faber, pp. 53-5.

<sup>134</sup> Giovanna Zapperi, 'Women's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives', *Feminist Review*, 105.1 (2013), 21-47, p. 40. For further discussion on visual representations of women as national iconography see: Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Gerry Kearns, 'Mother Ireland and the Revolutionary Sisters', *Cultural Geographies*, 11.4 (2004), 443-67; Luis Cuesta and Roberta Johnson, 'La Niña Bonita: Tradition and Change in Female Allegories of the Second Spanish Republic', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 14.4 (2014), 415-61.

<sup>135</sup> For a broader perspective on this, see: Alison Fell, 'Female War Icons: Visual Representations of Women's Contribution to the First World War in France and Britain in 1914-1918 and 2014-2018', *European Journal of Feminist History*, 29.2 (2018), 35-49; Jonathan Rayner, 'The Carer, the Combatant and the Clandestine: Images of women in the First World War in *War Illustrated* magazine', *Women's History Review*, 27.4 (2018), 516-33; Marta Zarzycka, 'Outside the Frame: Re-Examining the Photographic Representations of Mourning', *Photography and Culture*, 7.1 (2014), 63-77.

<sup>136</sup> Orla Fitzpatrick, 'Portraits and Propaganda: Photographs of Widows and Children of the 1916 Leaders in the *Catholic Bulletin*' in *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising*, ed. by Joanna Brück and Lisa Godson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 82-90.

<sup>137</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 55-8.

sexualised than their Irish counterparts. While Irish photography was predominantly influenced by domestic portraiture, images of Spanish militiawomen were often visualised within the tradition of the eroticised ‘New Woman’, whose presence in European photojournalism signified both the re-negotiation of gendered norms and the development of new modes of glamour, but also anxiety around societal changes in the wake of the First World War.<sup>138</sup>

Photographs do not only determine what is seen in narratives of war, they also control what is excluded. The photographic practices of photographers, editors, and viewers establish frames of war that constitute the boundaries of what is seen and unseen.<sup>139</sup> Photography shapes and reproduces gendered norms, and in times of conflict, photography defines the boundaries of acceptable wartime femininity.<sup>140</sup> These boundaries continually shift according to the needs of the state, and thus the circulation, consumption, and exchange of these images within the visual economy constitutes and reinforces patriarchal narratives of conflict. Approaching these images from a material perspective allows us to uncover the role they play in constructing these narratives, and from there we can then reveal which narratives they erase.

#### 1.4 Literature Review

In the past twenty years, there has been a re-appraisal of photographs as historical sources. Studies from Elizabeth Edwards, Andrea Noble, Chris Pinney, and Gillian Rose have illuminated how approaching photographs as objects within social and cultural practices drives new ways of thinking about history.<sup>141</sup> Photographs are culturally mediated documents that

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<sup>138</sup> Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco, *The New Women International: Representations in Photography and Film from the 1870s through the 1960s* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011). It was not until after the Irish Civil War that the figure of the New Woman came to prominence in Ireland, hence why imagery of Irish militant women were not visualised within this framework. See: Louise Ryan, ‘Locating the flapper in rural Irish society: the Irish provincial press and the modern woman in the 1920s’ in *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism, and International Consumer Culture, 1880–1930*, ed. by Margaret Beetham and Ann Heilmann (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 106–17.

<sup>139</sup> Beatriz Pichel, *Picturing the Western Front: Photography, Practices and Experiences in First World War France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), pp. 210–11.

<sup>140</sup> Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography After Photography: Gender, Genre, History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

<sup>141</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, ‘Photographs and the Business of Doing History’, in *The Handbook of Photography Studies*, ed. by Gil Pasternak, (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 170–86, (p. 182). Material approaches to photography have developed widely across different fields, and as such they cannot be contained within a single footnote. The studies cited here represent works that influenced the field and that are typical of the main trends and turns of the historiography. Edwards, ‘Material Beings’; Edwards and Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories*; Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxon: Routledge, 2020); Andrea Noble and Alex Huges, *Phototextualities: intersections of Photography and Narrative* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003); J.J Long and Andrea Noble, *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Pinney, *Camera*

provide evidence of historically, culturally and socially specific ways of seeing the past, and they are embedded within complex practices of observation, production, reproduction and display.<sup>142</sup> Adoption of this approach in cultural war studies in particular has deepened our understanding of how photography shapes war and its legacies. Beatriz Pichel, for example, analysed how photographic practices shaped how civilians and combatants articulated and understood their experiences of war in France, while Alex Mayhew used photographic postcards to examine how soldiers maintained emotional bonds and relationships while at the front during the First World War.<sup>143</sup> Material approaches to photography have also been used to interrogate the intersections between war, gender, race, and colonialism, an approach that highlights the potential for photographs to act as both a vehicle for visibility and a mechanism for erasure.<sup>144</sup>

Yet, broadly speaking, these developments have not been reflected within histories of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War. Across general histories, biographies, and military histories of conflict in Ireland, photographs are used as uncritical and objective representations of the past. Illustrated histories such as Padraig Og O'Ruairc's *Revolution: A Photographic History of Revolutionary Ireland* use photographs for their visual appeal, transforming them into glossy images that continue to reinforce singular narratives of war.<sup>145</sup> As Justin Carville has identified, this approach is representative of how Irish historical scholarship focuses on the 'certainty of what is seen within the frame' over the photograph as a material object.<sup>146</sup> Within this framework, photographs are valued for their supposed ability to provide an objective truth, even as scholarship across visual studies has effectively challenged this notion of photographic truth.<sup>147</sup>

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*Indica*; Pinney, *Photos of the Gods*; Rose and Tolia-Kelly, *Visuality/Materiality*; Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography* (Routledge: Oxon, 2016).

<sup>142</sup> Rose, 'Practising Photography', p. 556.

<sup>143</sup> Pichel, *Picturing the Western Front*; Alex Mayhew, "'A War Imagined': Postcards and the Maintenance of Long Distance Relationships during the Great War", *War and History*, 3 (2019), 1-32.

<sup>144</sup> Cécile Bishop, 'Photography, Race and Invisibility', *Photographies*, 11.2-3 (2018), 193-213; Oliver Coates, 'Between Image and Erasure: Photographs of West African Soldiers in India, 1944-1946', *Radical History Review*, 132 (2018), 200-7; Elizabeth Edwards and Matthew Mead, 'Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums and the Colonial Past', *Museum and Society*, 17.1 (2002), 67-75.

<sup>145</sup> Og O'Ruairc, *Revolution*.

<sup>146</sup> Carville, 'Dusty Fingers of Time', p. 237.

<sup>147</sup> Photography's claim to being an instrument of truth lies in its use by the state as a tool of power and surveillance. While it has historically been perceived as a way to document objective reality, photographic historians such as John Tagg and John Roberts have thoroughly deconstructed this concept. John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2009); John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption: Realism, Photography and the Everyday* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

The Spanish Civil War was widely photographed, and its photographic corpus has been used to illustrate the war and its participants, a framework that follows the Irish historiographical preoccupation with photographs as authentic representations of the past.<sup>148</sup> In 1997, Caroline Brothers challenged this approach within her pioneering book *War and Photography: A Cultural History*, which called for photographs of the Spanish Civil War to be recognised as historical documents in their own right.<sup>149</sup> Using press photography, Brothers highlighted the importance of photographic materiality and circulation in understanding their role in documenting and shaping war. Despite being published over 35 years ago, her demand to rethink photography remains relevant as within contemporary scholarship, photographs of the Spanish Civil War continue to be utilised for their iconic status and documentary function.<sup>150</sup> Even works that engage with photographs on a more complex level, such as Katherine Stafford's analysis of Agustí Centelles's war photography in *Narrating War in Peace* and Lorna Arroyo Jiménez's work on the photojournalist Gerda Taro, focus on what these images depict rather than the complexities of how they are used.<sup>151</sup> Photographs are ambiguous, contradictory sources; they are not objective evidence of the past but rather social objects that operate in the fluid spaces of ideological and cultural meaning to inscribe certain narratives of the past.<sup>152</sup> In order to understand how photography has shaped narratives of war in Ireland and Spain, it is necessary to reckon with them as historical objects and to analyse both what they mean and what they do.

This is particularly important when examining the interactions between photography and gender within the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War. A rhetoric of visibility and invisibility surrounds the role of women in the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, and photographs are seen as a way to retrieve women from invisibility.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> This focus on authenticity is particularly reflected in the historical debates surrounding Robert Capa's iconic 'Falling Soldier' photograph, which has divided historians and the public on whether it was staged or not. For further details on this see: Michael Griffin, 'Media Images of War', *Media, War and Conflict*, 3.1 (2010), 97-41, p. 11; José Manuel Susperregui, 'La Localización de la Fotografía "Muerte de un Miliciano" de Robert Capa', *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 29.2 (2016), 17-44. Elizabeth Edwards has discussed the wider historiographical tendency to use photographs as way to give the past a concrete appearance and illustrate historical analysis in Edwards, 'Photography and the Business of Doing History', p. 178.

<sup>149</sup> Brothers, p. 15.

<sup>150</sup> For example: Aronson and Budhos, *Eyes of the World*; Parras and Cela, 'Comunicación y Memoria..

<sup>151</sup> Katherine Stafford, *Narrating War in Peace: The Spanish Civil War in the Transition and Today* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Lorna Arroyo Jiménez and Hugo Doménech Fabregat, 'Gerda Taro y Los Orígenes del Fotoperiodismo Moderno en la Guerra Civil Española', *Fotocinema*, 10 (2015), 119-53.

<sup>152</sup> Edwards, *Raw Histories*, p. 4. The reluctance to approach photographs as historical sources is further discussed in Edwards, 'Photography and the Business of Doing History', pp. 170-2.

<sup>153</sup> Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, p. 4; Maeve Casserly and Ciaran O'Neill, 'Public History, Invisibility and Women in the Republic of Ireland', *The Public Historian*, 39.2 (2017), 10-30; Yusta Rodrigo, 'Hombres Armados'; Shirley Mangini, *Memories of Resistance: Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). The discourse of visibility is seen more widely in feminist literature, such as Renate Bridenthal and Claudia

In this approach, epitomised by the use of photographs in biographical texts such as Sinéad McCole's *Guns and Chiffon*, Liz Gillis' *Women and the Irish Revolution*, Carlos Fonseca's *Las Trece Rosas*, and Ana Martínez Rus' *Milicianas: Mujeres Republicanas Combatientes*, photographs are positioned as a privileged vehicle for visibility.<sup>154</sup> In this sense, photographs contextualise women's lives and authenticate their presence, essentially fulfilling the role of the photograph as a trace of the real.<sup>155</sup> Photographs are again valued for what they depict, rather than the practices surrounding them. This framing of making invisible women visible does not account for the complexities of visibility, and indeed, it can naturalise erasure and prevent critical examinations of the process of being made visible and the power dynamics present in this interaction between marginalised groups and academia.<sup>156</sup> It is critical, therefore, to avoid using photographs as celebrations of newfound visibility and instead consider how these histories have been marginalised and how photography is used to construct selective ways of seeing women during war.

Feminist historians of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War have used photographic analysis to understand the construction of gendered discourses during war.<sup>157</sup> Louise Ryan's pioneering work on press representations of women's militancy during the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War primarily focused on textual analysis, but she also examined how photographs were used to sensationalise women's militancy and reinforce symbolic discourses of Catholic womanhood.<sup>158</sup> More recently, Sharon Crozier-De Rosa has explored how visual culture, including photography, monuments, and murals, has been used to construct gendered discourses of women's militancy in Ireland, with a focus on how

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Koonz, *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston: Houghton Milton, 1977); Nancy Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock, *Visible Women* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Ann Oakley, *Forgotten Wives: How Women Get Written Out of History* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2021).

<sup>154</sup> McCole, *Guns and Chiffon*; Liz Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution 1913-1923: A Photographic History* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2014); Carlos Fonseca, *Trece Rosas Rojas* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2004); Martínez Rus, *Milicianas*.

<sup>155</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 81.

<sup>156</sup> Joan Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', *Critical Inquiry*, 17.4 (1991), 773-97. Joan Scott problematises how supposedly hidden histories are celebrated only when they are recognised by academia, and she argues that there is a need for reflection when dealing with these histories.

<sup>157</sup> This is a subfield of broader work examining visual culture and the construction of gender in Ireland and Spain, which includes work such as: Úna Ní Bhroiméil and Dónal O'Donoghue, 'Doing Gender History Visually', in *Gender and Power in Irish History*, ed. by Mary Ann Valiulis (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), pp. 159-82; Donna Gilligan, 'Commemorating a Missing History: Tracing the Visual and Material Culture of the Irish Women's Suffrage Campaign, 1908-1918', in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*, ed. by Oona Frawley (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2021), pp. 142-70; Mary Nash, 'Mass Tourism and New Representations of Gender in Late Francoist Spain: The *Sueca* and Don Juan in the 1960s', *Cultural History*, 4.2 (2015), 136-61; Inbal Ofer, 'A "New" Woman for a "New" Spain: The *Sección Femenina* de la Falange and the Image of the National Syndicalist Woman', *European History Quarterly*, 39.4 (2009), 583-605.

<sup>158</sup> Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, pp. 205-52, (pp. 209-10); Louise Ryan, 'Reforming and Reframing: Newspaper Representations of Mary Bowles and the War of Independence, 1919-21', in *Irish Women at War: The Twentieth Century*, ed. by Gillian McIntosh and Diane Urquhart (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), pp. 35-50.

symbolic representations of the militant Constance Markievicz reflect different ways of remembering gendered participation during war<sup>159</sup> Within Spanish historiography, Nash's *Defying Male Civilization* examined visual representations of women's militancy during the Civil War, and observed the shift within propaganda from sexualised representations of the militiawomen to conventional imagery of women as mothers and victims of war.<sup>160</sup> Drawing on this approach, Brian D. Bunk and Lisa Lines also used public photography of militant women to trace how visual culture was used to redefine these women within conventional narratives of wartime femininity.<sup>161</sup> However, while these works include photography and visual culture in their critical analysis, they are representative of a historiographical tendency to over-emphasise the representational and semiotic aspects of the image, using them to contextualise and define broader historical narrative while not acknowledging the potential of these image-objects as a source themselves.<sup>162</sup>

Recent work within Irish and Spanish photographic history has challenged the uncritical use of photographs within mainstream histories by highlighting the importance of photographic practices.<sup>163</sup> Irish and Spanish photographic history is a rapidly developing and heterogeneous field, with a wide array of methods, approaches and research questions; as such, this discussion is intended to be representative rather than all-encompassing.<sup>164</sup> Of particular relevance to this project is the work on the photographic practices of the wartime press, and how this impacted on the cultural memory of war in Ireland and Spain. Brothers first examined Spanish Civil War press photography from a material perspective, examining how it circulated within the French and British press, but it is only recently that her approach has been replicated within the wider history of Spanish photojournalism.<sup>165</sup> In particular, Sebastiaan Faber's *Memory Battles* has addressed the importance of understanding the processes behind creating iconic photographs, and the ways in which these photographs circulate during

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<sup>159</sup> Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism*, pp. 90-107.

<sup>160</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 105-9

<sup>161</sup> Brian D. Bunk, 'Revolutionary Warrior and Gendered Icon: Aida Lafuente and the Spanish Revolution of 1934', *Journal of Women's History*, 15.2 (2003), 99-122; Lines, *Milicianas*, pp. 151-72.

<sup>162</sup> Elizabeth Edwards problematises this approach in her discussion of photographic methodologies in historical writing, see: Edwards, 'Photography and the Business of Doing History', pp. 178-80.

<sup>163</sup> For a representative example of Irish and Spanish photographic history see: Edward Chandler, *Photography in Ireland: The Nineteenth Century* (Dublin: Edmund Burke, 2001); Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*; Justin Carville, *Photography and Ireland* (London: Reaktion, 2011); Lisa Godson and Joanna Brück, *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015); María Rosón Villena, *Género, Memoria y Cultural Visual en el Primer Franquismo* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2016); Carmen Ortiz, Antonio Cea and Cristina Sánchez Carretero, *Maneras de Mirar: Lecturas Antropológicas de la Fotografía* (Madrid: CSIC, 2015).

<sup>164</sup> For wider overviews of photographic history in Ireland and Spain, see: Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, p. 10; Jorge Moreno Andrés, *El Duelo Revelado: La Vida Social de las Fotografías Familiares de las Víctimas del Franquismo* (Madrid: CSIC, 2020), p. 23.

<sup>165</sup> Brothers, *War and Photography*.

and after conflict. Using the example of rediscovered negatives from the photojournalists Robert Capa, David 'Chim' Seymour, and Gerda Taro, he argues that charting the circulation of images within the visual economy allows us to understand how they are invested with multiple layers of meanings and values.<sup>166</sup> This perspective is also seen in Justin Carville's analysis of press photography and material culture of the Easter Rising.<sup>167</sup> Carville's work demonstrates not only how the Rising was initially visualised in the press, but also how these photographs were then mobilised within commemorations of the rebellion. Tracking how these photographs were remade into postcards and memorial cards, and pasted into scrapbooks and albums, he highlights the importance of photographs as objects through which remembrance is performed.<sup>168</sup> In focusing on the male-dominated practice of photojournalism, however, these studies do not adequately account for women's engagement with war photography.

In recent years, a renewed focus on women's photographic practices has challenged the field of war photography. Historically, war photography has been conceptualised as a masculine practice that constructs an aestheticized narrative of war that reinforces traditional ideologies of gender.<sup>169</sup> However, as Val Williams first argued in 1994, a critical examination of women's practices and engagement with war photography disturbs this assumption.<sup>170</sup> The rise in cultural studies of war and gender problematised the exclusion of women from histories of war photography, and feminist historians began to highlight the need to turn our attention to women as photographic practitioners. Margaret Higonnet's 'X-Ray Vision' was one of the first studies to examine women's wartime photography.<sup>171</sup> Examining photographs by nurses, soldiers and professional photographers, she argued that women's photographs affirmed their

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<sup>166</sup> Faber, p. 56.

<sup>167</sup> Carville, 'Dusty Fingers of Time'; Justin Carville, 'Visualising the Rising: Photographs, Memory and the Visual Economy of the 1916 Easter Rising', in *Photographs, Histories and Meanings*, ed. by Marlene Kadar, Joanne Perreault and Linda Warley (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>168</sup> Carville, 'Dusty Fingers of Time', p. 244.

<sup>169</sup> Hanna Diamond and Claire Gorrara, 'Reframing War: Histories and Memories of the Second World War in the Photography of Julia Pirotte', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 20.4 (2012), 453-71, pp. 455-6. For more on the perceived masculinity of war photography, see: Michael Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism' in *Picturing The Past: Media, History and Photography*, ed. by Bonnie Brennan and Hanno Hardt (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), pp. 122-57; Oldfield, 'Calling the Shots'; Pippa Oldfield, *Photography and War* (London: Reaktion, 2019); Alan Trachtenberg, 'Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs', *Representations*, 9 (1985), 1-32; Patricia Vettel-Becker, *Shooting From The Hip Photography, Masculinity and Postwar America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Patricia Vettel-Becker, 'Destruction and Delight: World War II Combat Photography and the Aesthetic Inscription of Masculine Identity', *Men and Masculinities*, 5.1 (2002), 80-102; Val Williams, *Warworks: Women, Photography and the Iconography of War* (London: Virago, 1994); Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>170</sup> Williams, p. 15.

<sup>171</sup> Margaret Higonnet, 'X-Ray Vision: Women Photograph War', *Miranda*, 2 (2010), 1-13.

place at the front, allowing them to ‘claim the authority to speak as a witness in the “forbidden zone” of men’s combat’.<sup>172</sup> Whether they were active combatants, as examined by Hanna Diamond and Claire Gorrara in their analysis of the Jewish resister Julia Pirotte’s photographs of the French Resistance, nurses, as in Andrea McKenzie’s exploration of Canadian nurse’s photographic albums during the First World War, or civilians, as in Sandy Callister’s analysis of women’s wartime photographic societies in New Zealand, women used the camera to legitimise their participation in and memories of war.<sup>173</sup>

While there has been a renewed focus on women as photographers, until Pippa Oldfield’s studies on women’s photographic engagement, there was little analysis on women as consumers within practices of war photography.<sup>174</sup> Oldfield’s work redefined the boundaries of war photography, as she addressed the role of women as producers, collectors and consumers; highlighting the diverse scope of photographic practices associated with war.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, her approach explicitly deconstructed how the androcentric approach to war photography has excluded women’s photographic practices, and the implications of these structural dynamics in rewriting women into the canonical histories of war photography.<sup>176</sup> By examining the diversity of women’s engagement with war photography, Oldfield skilfully demonstrated how focusing on women as photographic agents reveals how they challenged patriarchal structures of war. Women’s photography disrupted both the construction of normative femininity and the genre of war photography itself.

Within the fields of Irish and Spanish photographic history, only a minority of studies focus on women’s practices of war photography, hence why I included a broader examination of women’s war photography in this literature review. However, while these works may be few in number, their approaches and conclusions hold the potential to widely impact the field. Gail Baylis has frequently written on how photographs were used to produce a visual Irish masculinity, but her most recent work focused on how Constance Markievicz used

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<sup>172</sup> Higonnet, ‘X-Ray Vision’, p. 6.

<sup>173</sup> Diamond and Gorrara, p. 458; Andrea McKenzie, ‘Picturing War: Canadian Nurses’ First World War Photography’, *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 11.4 (2018), 318-34; Sandy Callister, ‘Being There: War, Women and Lantern Slides’, *Rethinking History*, 12.3 (2008), 317-37; Sandy Callister, *The Face of War: New Zealand’s Great War Photography*, (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008).

<sup>174</sup> Oldfield, ‘Calling the Shots’; Oldfield, *Photography and War*.

<sup>175</sup> Oldfield, ‘Calling the shots’, p. 67-71.

<sup>176</sup> In this, Oldfield draws on the influence of Griselda Pollock in her analyses of feminist art history and the dynamics of the masculinist artistic canon as a structure that continually others and excludes female artists. For her, the answer to women’s invisibility is not to seek their inclusion within a patriarchal canon, but to dismantle these structures and rewrite it. Pollock, *Vision and Difference*; Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (Oxon: Routledge, 1999).

photography to construct an explicitly revolutionary public persona.<sup>177</sup> Within this, Baylis argues that militant women used photography to deliberately shape how they were seen, and that the shifting circulation and consumption of these objects reflects the difficulty in publicly articulating their experiences of war. Orla Fitzpatrick's analysis of domestic photographs of women in the Irish newspaper *Catholic Bulletin* in the wake of the Easter Rising addresses similar themes, as she sheds light on how photographs were an instrument to control the narrative surrounding the rebellion.<sup>178</sup> In contrast to the militant women's own photographs, the editor of the newspaper, J.J Kelly, deliberately collected and commissioned photographs of the widows of the executed rebels in order to re-establish a patriarchal narrative of Irish nationalism. In Baylis and Fitzpatrick's research, the re-location of women's photographic agency is used to contest the construction of the nationalist mythologies centred on a gender-normative heroic masculinity. Exploring the dynamics of how militant women used and circulated photographs outside of the control of the Irish state's narratives of war reveals undercurrents of defiance that disrupt the post-war nationalist mythologies of the revolution. It is clear, then, that historians must go beyond examining only the visual content of the image and instead consider the rich material and cultural practices surrounding photographs in order to re-evaluate women's participation in war and their post-war memory activism.

Building on this theme of photography and defiance, two recent works on Spanish Civil War photography highlights the importance of considering women's photographic practices. Both María Rosón Villena and Jorge Moreno Andrés' studies on women and photography during the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship are connected by the role of women as keepers of photographs. Rosón Villena located women's photographic practices as a site of resistance, examining their affective role within women's lives as they navigated the Catholicised social imaginary produced by media during the Francoist dictatorship.<sup>179</sup> In contrast to the predominance of professional photography within visual histories of the Spanish Civil War, she focused on vernacular photographs and everyday objects, such as albums and scrapbooks, and she interrogated the elision of these objects within the wider archive of war and dictatorship. Moreno Andrés developed this further in his book *El Duelo*

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<sup>177</sup> Gail Baylis, 'What to Wear for a Revolution? Countess Constance Markievicz in Military Dress', *Eire-Ireland*, 54.3-4 (2019), 94-122. For Baylis's work on masculinity and photography, see: Gail Baylis, 'Gender in the Frame: Photography and the Performance of the Nation Narrative in Early-Twentieth Century Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, 22.2 (2014), 184-206.

<sup>178</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Portraits and Propaganda'.

<sup>179</sup> Rosón Villena, *Género, Memoria y Cultural Visual*; María Rosón Villena and Rosa Medina Domenech, 'Resistencias Emocionales. Espacios y Presencias de lo Íntimo en el Archivo Histórico', *Arenal*, 24.2 (2017), 407-39; María Rosón Villena, 'El Álbum Fotográfico del Falangista: Género y Memoria en la Posguerra Española', *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares*, 68.1 (2013), 215-38.

*Revelado*, which explores photographs of the victims of the Francoist dictatorship.<sup>180</sup> He traces how women in particular maintained counter-memories of the Spanish Civil War through clandestinely producing, hiding and keeping photographs, as well as how they have brought these photographs back into focus in recent years as part of efforts to recover historical memory. Women's photographic practices were an act of radical memory-keeping, defying the demands of the dictatorship to erase their experiences of war. Both studies have demonstrated the importance of considering photographs as emotional objects, with the visual content of the image inextricably entangled with its material nature.

As is apparent from this discussion, the themes of photography, gender and war intersect in complex and surprising ways within the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War. Collectively, these works demonstrate the multifaceted nature of photographs as historical sources, as the state used photography to construct gendered narratives that omitted women's presence within war while, simultaneously, militant women engaged with photography to affirm their experiences of war. Yet, while photographic histories of war within both Irish and Spanish studies have grown in recent years, they remain eclipsed by studies that frame photographs solely as visual illustrations and there remains a reluctance to examine this entanglement. By bringing these two case studies into dialogue, I intend to fulfil this historical lacunae and demonstrate how analysing women's photographic practices can enrich our understanding of gender and war, and challenge the patriarchal narratives currently surrounding militant women. In the next section, I set out my methodological approach, building on the scholarship discussed in this review, and clarify how I am using photography to address the research questions outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

### 1.5 Methodology

In this thesis, I approach photographs as historical objects that are part of the practices of warfare.<sup>181</sup> Focusing on photographs of militant women, taken both during and after conflict, I examine these as both visual and material objects: I explore how they have been used to shape public narratives of war and wartime ideologies of gender through visual representations of women, and I trace how these photographs are mobilised, consumed and circulated across both the public sphere and the private networks of militant women. In addition to this, I also trace how these photographs continue to circulate after war, and I

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<sup>180</sup> Moreno Andrés, *El Duelo Revelado*.

<sup>181</sup> Tom Allbeson and Pippa Oldfield, 'War, Photography, Business: New Critical Histories', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 9.2 (2016), 94-114, p. 97.

address how these photographs accrue new meanings as they are moved into new contexts and used to construct new ways of seeing women's militancy.<sup>182</sup> This longitudinal approach is critical to historicising and understanding the practices surrounding these projects, as photographs 'cannot be understood through only one moment of their existence but are marked through successive moments of consumption across space and time'.<sup>183</sup> By examining the afterlives of these photographs, I address how photographic meaning and the practices surrounding these photographs continually shifts as they are used as a tool of erasure by the post-conflict state, as a means of resisting erasure for militant women, and as a mechanism for recovery in contemporary commemorations of war.

I consulted a wide range of sources in the process of researching militant women's photographic practices. This methodological approach was influenced by Pippa Oldfield's work on women's war photography in the Americas, where she asserted the need to re-conceptualise war photography beyond the boundaries of traditional, male dominated photojournalism in order to understand the multitude of ways in which women engaged with photography and how their photographic practices have been erased.<sup>184</sup> In this thesis, I examined both official photographs visualising militant women, such as photojournalism, political propaganda, and reportage, as well as vernacular images produced and commissioned by militant women, such as studio photography, snapshots, and scrapbooks. Women's vernacular images are frequently excluded from photographic histories as they are seen as banal, repetitive and amateur.<sup>185</sup> By addressing this wide scope of source material and examining militant women's roles as photographic subjects, producers, and collectors, I demonstrate the importance of going beyond the canons of war photography to enrich our understanding of women, war and photography.

In terms of Irish source material, I primarily gathered the corpus from Kilmainham Gaol, the press collections of the National Library of Ireland (NLI), and women's personal papers deposited into the NLI and the University College Dublin Archives (UCDA). Kilmainham Gaol was a critical site for my research, as it included a wide range of material

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<sup>182</sup> This approach is inspired by Deborah Poole's concept of the visual economy. Deborah Poole argues that photographs accrue new meanings as they flow within different patterns of production, circulation, consumption and possession, and I use her model of the visual economy to chart the different meanings imposed onto photographs as they are moved into different contexts. Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Visual World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 8-10.

<sup>183</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond The Image', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41 (2012), 221-34, p. 222.

<sup>184</sup> Oldfield, 'Calling the Shots', p. 18

<sup>185</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, 'Seeing and Saying: A Response to "Incongruous Images", *History and Theory*, 48.4 (2009), 26-33, p. 30.

donated by women imprisoned during the Irish Civil War, which directly addressed women's activism before, during and after the revolutionary period. The open collection policy of the Kilmainham Restoration Society, which was a mixed-gender group of veterans that took ownership of the building in the 1950s, resulted in a large collection of vernacular objects, such as snapshots and autograph books that articulated more intimate histories of women's experiences of war. These proved to be critical in understanding how militant women negotiated their visibility during the post-conflict period. The newspaper collection at the NLI provided the majority of Irish press photographs used in this thesis, including both mainstream papers and radical, clandestine papers which provided alternative perspectives to the male-dominated narratives in the mainstream press. Finally, I also consulted the personal papers of militant women deposited in the UCDA and the NLI, which illuminated women's photographic practices, how these photographs circulated within activist women's private networks, and how they were used within women's defiant memory-keeping practices.

For Spanish source material, I primarily accessed material from the press collections of the Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE), the clandestine press collections in the Biblioteca Virtual de la Prensa Histórica (BVPH), the photographic collections of the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica (CDMH), and the anarchist photographic collections in the Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo (FAL) and the International Institute for Social History (IISG). The dynamics of how these photographs were collected in archives reflects the complex role of photography in war. The photographic collections in the FAL and IISG had been smuggled out of the country prior to the fall of Madrid in March 1939, while the press photographs in the CDMH had been collected on behalf of the Francoist regime as visual evidence framing militant women as enemies of the state. In contrast to the Irish source material, within the Spanish collections, there was a greater collection of press photography and less publicly available vernacular images. The increased role of photojournalism in the Spanish Civil War gave rise to a greater production and circulation of press photography, while the culture of terror and enforced silence in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War resulted in a more clandestine, personal photographic practice where photographs were hidden or destroyed rather than donated to regional or national archives.<sup>186</sup> As such, the majority of Spanish vernacular photography discussed in this thesis is gathered from published testimonies by militant women, such as Tomasa Cuevas' *Testimonios de Mujeres* (1986) and women's clandestine press.

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<sup>186</sup> Moreno Andrés, *El Duelo Revelado*.

In understanding how photographs constructed narratives of war, it is critical to reflect on how the archival practices surrounding photographs impact on how we, as historians, look at these photographs.<sup>187</sup> The archive is not a neutral space, and it constructs its own standards of historical value, as the categorisation and cataloguing of photographs inscribe select narratives of the past and erase the potential of other narratives.<sup>188</sup> Photographs are often used as a subsidiary to other collection objects, providing a record of how the object looks or how it is used, reinforcing the dominance of the photograph as a vessel for the visual rather than an object with its embodied history and use.<sup>189</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to interrogate how photographs are framed in the archive, taking account of what remains unsaid and unseen in the narrative constructed by the archive.<sup>190</sup>

An example of this need to interrogate the archive is the way in which militancy is defined in the archive, and the potential erasure that this incurs. While I deliberately used an inclusive definition of women's militancy, this was not reflected in how materials were catalogued and located in the archive. For example, across both Irish and Spanish, photographs of nurses and women providing first aid were not catalogued as militant women, yet women themselves described these activities as evidence of their militancy in memoirs, testimonies, and pension applications. I consequently expanded my source material to include women's photographs published outside of the archive in collected testimonies, and I intentionally consulted all photographs including women, rather than just those categorised as militant women. Nevertheless, there will have been photographs excluded from the archive because they do not fit the parameters of militancy.<sup>191</sup> Another issue I encountered with these photographs was the anonymity of the women within them. In the majority of the photographs in this thesis, the women pictured are unnamed, as their names were not recorded when the photograph was taken. This anonymity can be seen across both professional and vernacular photography. In press photographs, the names of the subjects were often not recorded and they were referred to as archetypes, while vernacular

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<sup>187</sup> For a thorough overview of the dynamics of the archive on photographs, see Rose, 'Practising Photography'.

<sup>188</sup> Karen Cross and Julia Peck, 'Editorial: Special Issue on Photography, Archive and Memory', *Photographies*, 3.2 (2010), 127-38.

<sup>189</sup> Elizabeth Edwards, 'Thoughts on the "Non-Collections" of the Archival Ecosystem' in *Photo-Objects: On the Materiality of Photographs and Photo-Archives in the Humanities and Sciences*, ed. by Julia Bärnighausen, Costanza Caraffa, Stefanie Klamm, Franka Schneider and Petra Wodtke, (Berlin: Max Planck Research Library, 2019), (pp. 67-82).

<sup>190</sup> Feminist work on photography and the archive has addressed the dynamics of silence and gaps in the archive, with photographic absences offering a radical potential to disrupt the binary of visibility and invisibility, and articulate the multiple narratives contained within the photograph. See: Krista Thompson, 'The Evidence of Things Not Photographed: Slavery and Historical Memory in the British West Indies', *Representations*, 113.4 (2011), 39-71.

<sup>191</sup> Rose, 'Practising Photography', p. 565.

photographs in archival collections are often de-contextualised and removed from their wider sequences. The anonymous women in these snapshots are thus unmoored, turned into what Martha Langford describes as the ‘vast sisterhood of posing women, whose repurposed images float in collective memory as works of art’.<sup>192</sup> In the archive, photographs simultaneously function as a site of visibility and erasure.<sup>193</sup>

This silence is compounded as these images are reproduced online. As archival collections are digitised, they circulate beyond the archive, across the larger networks of Instagram, Twitter and Flickr where they are seen as part of a wave of context-less images. These images are collated into reductive mythologies that use their visual content to signify how women have defied gendered roles and patriarchy, while obscuring the social biography of the photograph and removing it further from its material form.<sup>194</sup> This detachment of the image from its material form is another issue of digitisation that impacted how I accessed these images. As a collection practice, digitisation increases the potential reach of images but it also removes the sensory dimension of the image, transmuting an image that holds the physical traces of its use and history into a visual image on the screen.<sup>195</sup> When working with physical collections, I made notes on the conditions of the photo: how the photograph had been conserved and mounted, whether a caption was written on the back, if it had the features of wear and tear from constant use or if it was untouched. Looking at these images brought about small moments of discovery- a name written on the back of the photograph, a half-recognised face from a different image. Working with digital images, however, detached these material details from the image, and I could only speculate as to how the photograph had been used before it came to the archive.

The photographs of militant women within this text existed within intersecting networks of people. They have been found forgotten in attics, preserved in albums, catalogued in archives, and framed on museum walls, and they are artefacts of solidarity, of anger, of joy, sorrow, revolutionary hope and nostalgic melancholia. It is this ambiguity of meaning, the entanglement of multiple complex narratives and gazes contained within a single photograph,

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<sup>192</sup> Martha Langford, ‘That Other Woman: The Woman Who Accompanied the Cold War Tourist to Paris’, in *Picturing the Family: Media, Narrative, Memory*, ed. by Silke Arnold-de Simine and Joanne Leal, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Routledge: Abingdon, 2020), pp. 19-40, (p. 23).

<sup>193</sup> Edwards and Mead, p. 32.

<sup>194</sup> Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes, ‘Introduction: Anthropology, Photography and the Archive’, *History and Anthropology*, 21.4 (2010), 337-49, p. 340. See also: Christina Riggs, ‘Reborn-Digital Tutankhamun: Howard Carter and an Egyptian Archaeologist, Name Unknown’, *Photography and Culture*, (2021), 1-5.

<sup>195</sup> For a thorough discussion of the digitisation of archival photographs from a material perspective see: Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, pp. 34-44.

which makes photographs an important historical object to add nuance to how we look at the past. These objects are not simply records of the past, they are socially salient objects that are deliberately composed, edited and distributed in order to inscribe certain narratives, and which offer ‘evidence of historically, culturally and socially-specific ways of seeing the world’.<sup>196</sup>

### 1.6 Chapter Outline

Drawing upon a mosaic of different photographic practices, I construct a multi-layered narrative of militant women’s visibility and erasure. Taking a longitudinal approach, I address questions of how militant women were visualised during and after conflict across the public and private spheres, how they negotiated and resisted against their erasure by the state, and finally, how photographs have been used to recover and integrate their experiences into the cultural memory of war in twenty-first century Ireland and Spain. In each chapter, I focus on a distinct time period, allowing me to chart the different ways in which women have been seen in cultural narratives of war, and the undercurrent of erasure running through this process.

I begin in Chapter 2 by exploring how women’s militancy was visualised during war by historicising the production, circulation and consumption of photographs of Irish and Spanish militant women from 1916-1923 and 1936-1939. Focusing predominantly on professionally produced photographs, including press photography, propaganda, postcards, and studio portraits, I examine how the state used photography to construct complex and contradictory representations of wartime femininity. I comprehensively analyse how militant women were photographed at different points of the conflicts, and reflect on how changing gendered discourses and public attitudes towards women’s participation contributed to shifts in how women’s militancy was constructed in photography. I challenge the idea that women’s participation was forgotten solely during the post-conflict period and instead demonstrate that processes of erasure and visibility were entangled during conflict, as photographs of militant women were continually redefined and remade to conform to patriarchal narratives of war. I conclude by highlighting both the need to examine women’s visibility as an intricate process of continual negotiation, and the importance of historicising and critically analysing the visual content of images as well as the photographic practices surrounding them.

In Chapter 3, I build on this theme of visibility as negotiation and analyse how militant women used photography to resist against their erasure by the state during the post-conflict period. Firstly, I establish how state propaganda used photographs as a tool of social control

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<sup>196</sup> Rose, ‘Practising Photography: p. 556.

to frame militant women as threats to the re-established gendered order of the Irish Free State and the Francoist dictatorship. Secondly, I address how militant women transformed these photographs into a means of defiance by republishing and redefining them in the radical press, focusing on the Irish newspaper *An Phoblacht* (1925-1936) and the Spanish exile paper *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* (1946-50). I argue that in the immediate aftermath of war these pockets of visibility allowed women to reclaim control over their memories of war, but they did not substantively challenge the patriarchal frameworks of war that enabled their erasure. In 1960s Ireland and 1980s Spain, however, women leveraged these pockets of visibility to publicly challenge their erasure from narratives of war. Prompted by the commemorations surrounding the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Easter Rising and the Spanish Civil War, I examine how militant women produced photographic memoirs that used prison photographs to articulate and affirm their role in war. This chapter shows the difficulty of challenging patriarchal erasure, but moreover, it demonstrates how examining women's photographic practices, rather than their presence in photographs, allows us to re-insert them as agents within the process of resisting exclusionary public narratives of war.

In the second half of the thesis, I consider the complexities of remembering and reintegrating militant women into contemporary narratives and commemorations of war in Ireland and Spain. Cultural memory explores the complex process by which certain memories become public, while others remain marginalised, and photographs offer a critical way of understanding how these dynamics interact with processes of erasure.<sup>197</sup> In Chapter 4, I explore how iconic photographs of militant women have been re-circulated in commemorations of war in Ireland and Spain as a way to recover and integrate women's experiences of war into mainstream, public narratives. These images are held up as exemplars of the rediscovery of women's marginalised histories, yet I argue that they do not necessarily disrupt patriarchal narratives of war, but rather reinforce it through the hagiographic mythologisation and recovery of individual women. Using the examples of Elizabeth O'Farrell and Marina Ginestà, two women erased and rediscovered through photographs, I historicise these photographs, examining the circumstances of their production and initial circulation before deconstructing the role of these images within contemporary commemorations of war, and exploring how myths of rediscovery have been constructed around these images as they re-entered the public gaze. Within this chapter, I address the need to reconsider the framework of visibility as a tool for recovery and to reflect on who remains marginalised within these processes.

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<sup>197</sup> Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nunning, *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), p. 4.

Following on from this theme and the theoretical underpinnings of photography and remembrance, in Chapter 5 I consider how contemporary street art in Ireland and Spain uses photographs of militant women to subvert official narratives of war. Through remediating photographs into a new physical form and opening them up to new audiences, I argue that street artists construct new frameworks that enable the disruption of institutional narratives and they shape the potential emergence of alternative narratives of war.<sup>198</sup> Using four public murals created by Irish, Spanish and American street artists between 2016 and 2020, I analyse these works of art as part of the afterlives of the photographs that inspired them and I address how they challenge the previous narratives imposed on these images. Yet, while these images construct radical counter-narratives of war, they also reproduce the patriarchal conditions of visibility that have surrounded these photographs from their initial production. Therefore, I conclude by considering how these murals function within a wider constellation of contemporary visual and memory practices seeking to dismantle patriarchal narratives of war.

Finally, in the conclusion I bring together these themes of visibility, erasure, defiance, and remembrance to consider how examinations of militant women's photographic practices hold the potential to disrupt patriarchal narratives of war. Examining the complexities of photographic practices during war allows us to re-evaluate our understanding of gender and war in the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, and the impact of this on contemporary narratives of war. This thesis is not only a study of how militant women were deliberately excluded from state narratives of war; it is also the story of their resistance to this erasure and the need to take inspiration from this resistance as we dismantle patriarchal narratives of war.

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<sup>198</sup> For further discussion on medial frameworks see: Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011), pp. 128-31.

## Chapter 2

### ‘Chocolate Box Heroines’: Defining Wartime Femininities through Photographs of Women’s Militancy in Ireland and Spain, 1916-1939.

Photography is a tool of power and control. Writing on the social history of photographs, photographer Gisèle Freund argued that ‘the importance of photographs lies not in their artistic potential, but in their ability to shape our ideas and define society’.<sup>199</sup> As a tool of social control, their power is particularly evident in what Tom Albseon and Pippa Oldfield have termed the ‘war photography complex’, where images and their circulation play a central role in the practices of warfare.<sup>200</sup> Broadly speaking, within histories of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, photographs of war have been reproduced as illustrative evidence with minimal critical engagement with them as historical objects that contain their own embodied histories of use and meaning. This is particularly relevant when taking a gendered perspective on war photography, wherein public reproductions of these photographs position them as signifiers of feminist empowerment. These uncritical reproductions produce a reductive mythology of women’s participation in war, which deifies the women pictured in photographs of active militarism while neglecting the circumstances under which these images are produced and consumed.<sup>201</sup> Yet, by examining how these photographs were used and circulated, it becomes clear that these images produced complex and often contradictory ideological narratives surrounding women’s place in warfare. Furthermore, by integrating militant women’s photographic practices into our consideration of war photography, we can explore how militant women navigated and negotiated their position within these narratives.

In twentieth-century Europe, women’s engagement with war destabilised gendered relations and blurred the visual boundaries between masculinity and femininity, as photographs of women wearing masculine, militarised uniforms and taking over male-coded

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<sup>199</sup> Gisèle Freund, *Photography And Society* (Boston: David R Godine, 1980), p. 5.

<sup>200</sup> Allbeson and Oldfield describe the war photography complex as a ‘broad cultural phenomenon encompassing visual material and technologies which are created and deployed within the expansive field of wartime image production, circulation and consumption’, a concept that challenges the perception of war photography as a canon of images. Allbeson and Oldfield, p. 98.

<sup>201</sup> As discussed in the introduction, the problematic approach to viewing historical war photography as empowerment has been thoroughly deconstructed by Andrea Noble and Pippa Oldfield. See Noble, ‘Gender in the Archive’, pp. 140-2; Oldfield, ‘Calling the Shots’.

roles across both the rearguard and homefront circulated within the press and propaganda.<sup>202</sup> This destabilisation incited attempts to reconstruct the patriarchal order.<sup>203</sup> In this chapter, I explore how photographs were used during the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War to re-affirm and reconstruct normative ideals of gender by shaping and defining narratives of femininity and masculinity. I particularly focus on the production and circulation of photographs of militant women, as these images were a potent site for understanding how the construction of wartime femininity was a process of continual negotiation, determined by the needs of the nation state. In order to understand how photographs of women's militancy shaped ideological gendered narratives during war, I will historicise the production, circulation and consumption of photographs of Irish and Spanish militant women from 1916-1923 and 1936-1939 respectively. I predominantly focus on press and commercial photographs, due to their high levels of circulation and their role in constructing cultural imaginaries of nation, war and gender.<sup>204</sup> In addition to this, I will also analyse militant women's photographic practices and the ways in which they negotiated how they were seen within commercial photography. In doing so, I highlight how women constructed counter-narratives that challenged the gendered ideologies enforced by the state, and foregrounded their own active participation in war.

One way of understanding how gender was constructed during conflict is through examining the production and consumption of commercial photographic postcards during the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War.<sup>205</sup> In both Ireland and Spain, they were used to assert the legitimacy and respectability of the Irish nationalist and Spanish Republican movements through reinforcing ideological narratives of gender. Further to this, these postcards used gendered war photography to re-affirm the patriarchal order. In the wake of the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, commercial photography studios such as the nationalist Powell Press commodified the executed leaders through producing photographic postcards that were widely circulated and sold throughout Ireland.

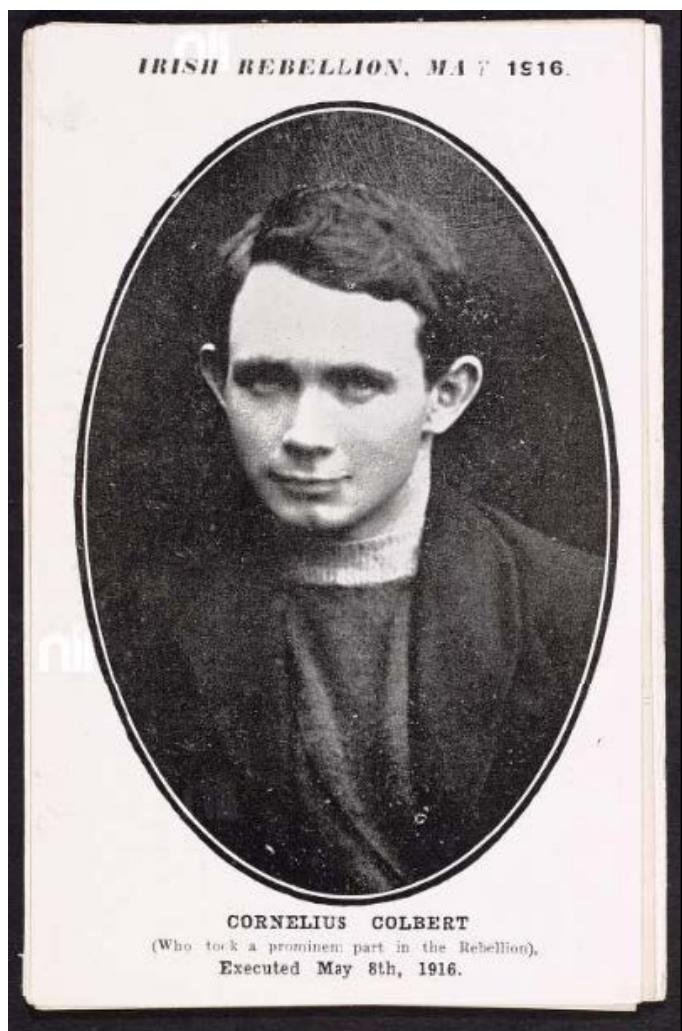
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<sup>202</sup> Penny Summerfield, 'Gender and War in the Twentieth Century', *The International History Review*, 19.1 (1997), 3-15, p. 5.

<sup>203</sup> Joanna Bourke, 'Gender Roles in Killing Zones' in *The Cambridge History of the First World War: Volume 3, Civil Society*, ed. by Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 153-80, (p. 153).

<sup>204</sup> Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>205</sup> For more on postcards and war see Mayhew, 'A War Imagined'.



**Figure 2.1**, Powell Press, *Cornelius Colbert*, 1916, postcard. Courtesy of National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

As Figure 2.1 of the Irish revolutionary Cornelius 'Con' Colbert shows, these postcards highlighted the masculine respectability of their subjects. In order to legitimise the rebellion in the eyes of middle-class Irish society, Powell Press deliberately framed the executed men within an iconographic tradition of Catholic martyrdom that was designed to garner sympathy and support for the nationalist movement.<sup>206</sup> Within this visual commemoration of the rebellion, however, women's experiences were excluded, as their presence as active participants within the revolutionary process would have threatened the gendered dynamics of the Irish nationalist mythos, which was founded upon a dichotomy of virile, soldierly masculinity and subordinate, nurturing femininity.<sup>207</sup> As I will discuss later in this chapter, these acts of erasure inspired Irish militant women to produce and distribute their own photographic memorabilia.

<sup>206</sup> Gail Baylis, 'Con Colbert's Portrait'.

<sup>207</sup> Sarah Benton describes the development of a martial, masculine nationalism in Sarah Benton, 'Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland, 1913-23', *Feminist Review*, 50.1 (1995), 148-72.



**Figure 2.2.** Spanish Communist Party, *Lina Odéna*, 1936, postcard. Courtesy of Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca.

In contrast to Ireland, images of Spanish Republican militant women were embedded within the revolutionary mythos and its commercial output.<sup>208</sup> Yet, their photographic visibility was contradictory, with a minority photographed as revolutionary symbols while the majority of women were visualised through gendered tropes of war photography, such as the suffering mother or the passive victim.<sup>209</sup> As Tabea Linhard has demonstrated in her analysis of cultural productions during the Spanish Civil War, even iconic female revolutionaries were

<sup>208</sup> Brothers, p. 78.

<sup>209</sup> This multiplicity of narratives of wartime femininity reflects the complexity of gender relations within the revolutionary environment of Spain, where some women such as the communist leader Dolores Ibárruri and the anarchist politician Federica Montseny were used to represent the possibilities of empowerment offered by social revolution, while the collective experiences of Spanish women were framed within more traditional frameworks of gender and war.

positioned within patriarchal frameworks that emphasised their innocence, purity and femininity.<sup>210</sup> An example of this can be seen in Figure 2.2, with a Communist postcard of the militiawoman and activist Lina Odena, who died by suicide on the front in September 1936. Produced by the Partido Comunista Española (PCE, Spanish Communist Party) in 1937, this postcard valourising a militiawoman seemingly contradicted the PCE's support of the forced withdrawal of women from the frontlines; however, it is in fact an example of how women's militant visibility was mediated through gendered discourse. The young and beautiful Odena, dressed in the uniform of the militias with the JSU flag imposed behind her and captioned as the 'Heroine of the Youth' epitomised the idealised figure of the militiawoman, yet she achieved this iconicity only through her death.<sup>211</sup> After she committed suicide rather than risk capture by the enemy, Odena was eulogised and mythologised as a popular heroine. However, these mythologies feminised Odena, as they focused on her inherent feminine virtues and framed her suicide as an active decision to protect these virtues against the threat of rape; a framing that 'restores gender roles instead of obliterating them'.<sup>212</sup> The postcard of Odena thus visualised her as a symbol of Communist ideals, a martyr, and a reminder of gendered threat posed to women during conflict. Photographs constructed gendered narratives that allayed cultural anxieties regarding women's participation in war by erasing or redefining women's participation within conflict. While these exclusionary processes are most frequently theorised as part of the post-war reconstruction of the gendered order, I will demonstrate that in Ireland and Spain these processes of erasure were active during the period of conflict itself.<sup>213</sup>

I begin the chapter by focusing on how militant women were visualised during the Irish revolutionary period. Women's militancy has often been described through the rhetoric of invisibility, and I aim to challenge this position by highlighting the diverse ways in which militant women were seen within the photographic environment of war.<sup>214</sup> I argue that rather than being invisible, they were continually redefined and positioned within frameworks of

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<sup>210</sup> Tabea Alexa Linhard, *Fearless Women in the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), p. 73.

<sup>211</sup> Martyred women were often positioned within explicitly feminine narratives, as discussed by Tabea Alexa Linhard and Brian D. Bunk. See: Brian D. Bunk, *Ghosts of Passion: Martyrdom, Gender and the Origins of the Spanish Civil War*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Tabea Alexa Linhard, 'The Death Story of the "Trece Rosas"', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 3.2 (2002), 187-202; Linhard, *Fearless Women*.

<sup>212</sup> Linhard, *Fearless Women*, p. 127.

<sup>213</sup> Cynthia Enloe, for example, describes how in both post-war and post-revolutionary states, patriarchal ideals of family are 'reconfirmed and made to serve as the cornerstone of public order'. Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?*, p. 161.

<sup>214</sup> For example: Mary Cullen, 'Invisible Women and their Contribution to Historical Studies', *Stair: The Journal of the Irish History Teachers Association* (1982), reprinted in Mary Cullen, *Telling it Our Way: Essays in Gender History*, (Dublin, Arlen House, 2013), pp. 49-64.

traditional, Catholicised femininity that facilitated their erasure from the revolutionary mythos. Firstly, I analyse the photographs of Constance Markievicz that were circulated in the wake of the Easter Rising. I compare Markievicz's cultivation of a militant aesthetic in her self-portraits to how she was visualised in popular postcards and religious periodicals, which deliberately omitted her violent militancy and defined her within the archetype of the domestic mother. Secondly, I explore how militant women negotiated the gendered photographic gaze present in press photography to assert their political agency. Using photographs of public mourning and funerals, I demonstrate how women subverted gendered expectations and used photographic tropes of domestic femininity to publicly legitimise their militancy. Finally, I examine women's photographic practices during the revolutionary period, focusing on commissioned studio portraiture and amateur photographs. I argue that the production of these images demonstrates how militant women actively constructed their own militant identity through photography. While public photographs shaped gendered ideologies within state narratives of the revolution, militant women produced and circulated these private images to resist against the erasure of women's participation in conflict.

In the second case study, I chart how militiawomen were visualised in the Spanish conflict. Between July and September 1936, militiawomen were photographed as active participants on the front, while from October 1936 to March 1937, photographs of militiawomen were re-defined within gendered, domestic narratives as women began to be forcibly withdrawn from the front. In the final years of the war, production and circulation of these images ceased almost entirely as photographers instead visualised women within the narratives of motherhood and victimhood. However, photographic representations of women during the Spanish Civil War was not unilateral, and there were overlaps between these different ways of visualising women within different publications and outlets. Firstly, I examine how the initial photographs of militiawomen published in the press and political postcards were fraught with contradiction, paralleling how militant women had been seen in Irish nationalist visual culture. Framed as glamourous cover girls, these images reinforced the femininity of women at the front in order to allay cultural anxieties that had been generated by the active participation of women in violence and the masculine space of conflict.<sup>215</sup> Secondly, I explore how press photography in the illustrated magazine *Crónica* attempted to redefine militiawomen as respectable by imparting new narratives of domestic femininity onto them.

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<sup>215</sup> Matthew Kovacs discusses how women's participation in militant movements generated fear and cultural anxieties in right-wing nationalist movements during the interwar period in Matthew Kovac, 'Red Amazons'? Gendering Violence and Revolution in the Long First World War, 1914-23', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20.4 (2019), 69-82.

As the war went on, press photography of militiawomen generated anxiety over fears of improper conduct and women's transgression of gendered norms. Using the archetypes of the military wife and nurse, I argue that Spanish press photography constructed a gendered ideology that emphasised patriarchal continuity rather than revolutionary social change. Finally, I address how commercial photographs shifted focus to visualising women as victims rather than participants of war. In doing so, these photographs re-asserted the patriarchal boundaries of gender that had been dislocated earlier in the war, demonstrating the role of photography in shaping how women were seen during war. I argue, therefore, that representations of militant women were used to control and define the metamorphosing gendered ideologies of the Republican movement during the Civil War.

Throughout this chapter, I emphasise that photographs are mediated cultural objects that are instrumental in constructing gendered narratives of war in Ireland and Spain. Building on Hayes' analysis, I argue it is critical to understand how these objects shape and normalise gendered relations during war, and to analyse them not as record of an objective truth, but as instruments of power. I do not analyse these photographs as signifiers of a feminist environment that make women visible, but as objects with an embodied history of usage that can reveal more about the mechanisms of power and ideology during war.<sup>216</sup> Yet, as I aim to show throughout this chapter, these photographs hold multiple, complex narratives that are revealed in the patterns of material circulation and consumption surrounding them.

## 2.1 **Photographic Domesticity and the Displacement of Women's Militancy: Constance Markievicz in Postcards and the Press**

From the beginning of the Irish revolutionary period, militant women's photographic practices contradicted dominant narratives of the rebellion. Figure 2.3, for example, shows how the Irish rebel Constance Markievicz used photography to cultivate a revolutionary aesthetic that emulated masculine militarism. Borrowing the military uniform of Michael Mallin, second in command of the ICA, she commissioned a series of studio portraits from the Dublin-based Keogh Brothers studio, who were key players in the construction of republican visual culture.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Hayes, p. 522.

<sup>217</sup> Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, pp. 65-6.



Figure 2.3, Keogh Brothers, *Portrait of Countess Markievicz in Irish Citizens Army Uniform*, 1916. Courtesy of National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

These portraits blurred masculinity and femininity, as her masculine stance, militaristic uniform, and pistol contrasted against a flamboyantly feminine ostrich feather hat.<sup>218</sup> Markievicz's active participation and defiance of the gendered order was then used by the British government and mainstream press as a way to delegitimise the republican movement. In the wake of the 1916 Easter Rising, the Irish and British press positioned the rebellion as criminal recklessness and framed its leaders as pawns of a German plot to disrupt British war efforts.<sup>219</sup> Operating under the censorship of the Defence of the Realm Act, which censored

<sup>218</sup> Weihman, p. 236.

<sup>219</sup> Mark O'Brien, 'Fighting and Writing: Journalists and the 1916 Easter Rising', *Media History*, 24.3-4 (2018), 350-63; Kieran McMorran, '"A German Bred Revolt": The *Manchester Guardian's* Perceptions of the Irish Easter Rising, 1916', *Irish Studies Review*, 27.4 (2019), 564-77.

promotion of pro-nationalist sentiment, newspapers highlighted the seditious and transgressive elements of the revolt in order to halt the growth of revolutionary republicanism.<sup>220</sup> The British and Irish mainstream press used Markievicz's adoption of a militaristic, revolutionary identity as a way to delegitimise Irish nationalism. For example, the London-based *Daily Mirror* condemned her as a corrupting influence who 'lured rebels to their folly'.<sup>221</sup> This focus on Markievicz, mockingly pictured as a cross-dressing, gun-slinging aristocrat, framed her transgressive militancy as an aberration and undermined the actions of other militant women.<sup>222</sup> While the British press redefined and adopted Markievicz's revolutionary portraiture into their disparaging narrative of the Irish rebellion, Markievicz's deliberate self-fashioning of a martial identity also posed an issue for the nationalist movement as it contradicted their attempts to legitimise and redefine the Easter Rising within a Catholic, patriarchal framework. In a similar process of redefinition, they circulated photographs of Markievicz in their own propaganda that emphasised her identity as a mother, in an attempt to overshadow her transgression of gendered norms by framing her within tropes of gendered domesticity and motherhood.

In the weeks after the rebellion, when the British military occupied Dublin, sympathy and solidarity with the nationalist cause rose.<sup>223</sup> A series of postcards produced by Powell Press, based on photographs shot by the Keogh Brothers, exemplifies how commercial studios used studio portraiture to legitimise the rebellion and position its leaders in the tradition of Catholic martyrs.<sup>224</sup> Supporters of Irish independence, radicalised by the reprisals and mass arrests that accompanied British occupation, collected portraits of the executed leaders of the Easter Rising.<sup>225</sup> Adapted from domestic photographs, these portraits were modified into postcards, badges, and other memorabilia that allowed consumers to forge an emotional connection with the Easter Rising and display their support of the rebels.<sup>226</sup> In

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<sup>220</sup> McMorran, p. 565.

<sup>221</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 'Countess who wrecked two young lives: how she lured rebels to their folly', 8 May 1916.

<sup>222</sup> Ryan, "Furies" and "diehards", pp. 260-1. Ryan also notes that the only other woman discussed in the press coverage of the Rising was Grace Gifford Plunkett, the tragic artist who married her fiancée in the hours before his execution. Gifford's experiences were more easily contained within normative frameworks of femininity.

<sup>223</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 279

<sup>224</sup> Erika Hanna has discussed how Irish studio photographic practice centred on crafting its subjects as respectable, a connection crucial in understanding why portrait postcards were so impactful in re-defining the Rising. Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, pp. 61-3

<sup>225</sup> These photographic postcards have been McGarry, p. 281; Mark McCarthy, 'Making Irish Martyrs: The Impact and Legacy of the Execution of the Leaders of the Easter Rising, 1916' in *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: from Peterloo to Present*, ed. by Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 165-203, (p. 194).

<sup>226</sup> Jack Elliot, "After I am hanged my portrait will be interesting but not before": Ephemera and the Construction of Personal Responses to the Easter Rising', in *Making 1916: Visual and Material Culture of the Easter Rising*, ed. by Lisa Godson and Joanna Bruck, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015) pp. 91-8, (p. 93).

particular, postcards provided an accessible outlet for popular sentiment as a collective site of national grief that mythologised its subjects.<sup>227</sup> As studio portraiture had historically been used to signify respectability, reproducing studio portraits of the leaders of the Easter Rising legitimised the participants, and the rebellion itself, and challenged the British narrative of criminality. Within this process of legitimising the revolution, however, women's participation was erased from the visual narrative constructed around the Easter Rising. The exception to this was Constance Markievicz.



**Figure 2.4**, Powell Press, *Constance Georgina Markievicz (nee Gore-Booth), Countess Markievicz*, 1916, halftone postcard print. Courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London

In order to further legitimise the movement, Irish nationalists needed to renegotiate Markievicz's self-construction of a revolutionary identity. A studio portrait taken by the Lafayette Studio in 1908, which depicted Markievicz as a classically-feminine aristocrat, was

<sup>227</sup> Gail Baylis, 'Boy Culture and Ireland, pp. 204-5.

reproduced in postcards and the Irish press in place of her own revolutionary portraiture. The reproduction of this photograph, as seen in Figure 2.4, reconfigured Markievicz within a narrative of domestic femininity, in contrast to the revolutionary and martial tone of the other postcards. Figure 2.4 had been produced by the Powell Press studio, and it depicted a young Markievicz standing in an opulent room wearing a fashionable gown, her face in profile. Her status as a member of the Anglo-Irish aristocratic ascendancy is the focus of this image, a visual representation of her class, status, and respectability. The postcard positioned her within the framework of normative femininity and removed Markievicz from the martial, soldierly visual tradition of Irish nationalism that she had emulated in Figure 2.3.<sup>228</sup> This postcard re-established patriarchal gendered boundaries that had been made more fluid during the rebellion, silencing the emergence of a more radical republican politics.<sup>229</sup>

Alongside the production of photographic memorabilia, the monthly newspaper the *Catholic Bulletin* was fundamental in sanctifying the Easter Rising and reaffirming the patriarchal order.<sup>230</sup> The *Catholic Bulletin* was a popular periodical published between 1911 and 1939, which promoted a Catholic nationalist political vision and a strict gendered ideology of sacrificial masculinity and domestic femininity, wherein women were confined to the roles of wife and mother.<sup>231</sup> The February 1917 issue of the *Catholic Bulletin* included a feature on notable women of the Easter Rising, and the editorial choices on whose experiences were included within this article are indicative of the paper's overall ideological approach. This biographical feature did not focus on women imprisoned because of their participation during the uprising or women present at key sites of action. Instead, the *Catholic Bulletin*'s first article examining women's experiences of the rebellion focused on 'the Irishwomen –the mothers and widows- whose sacrifices through the Easter Rising have imprinted themselves indelibly on Ireland's story'.<sup>232</sup> For the *Catholic Bulletin*, women's presence in the revolutionary narrative derived from their male relations, rather than their own activism.

Yet, this framework could not account for Countess Markievicz, an active combatant and lieutenant in the ICA. How, then, could the *Catholic Bulletin* integrate Markievicz into a Catholicised mythology of the Easter Rising? While the Powell postcard series had used

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<sup>228</sup> For more discussion on this series of images see: Gail Baylis, 'What to Wear for a Revolution?' and Tynan, 'The Unmilitary Appearance', pp. 29-31.

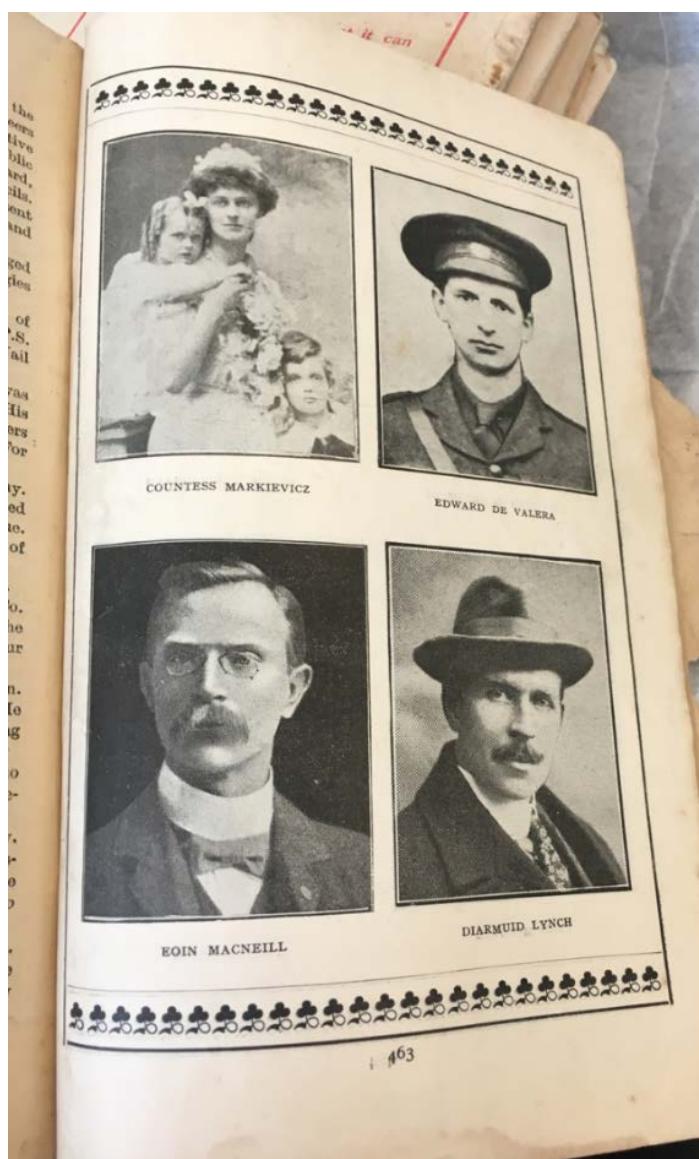
<sup>229</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *Rebels: Voices From the Easter Rising* (Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2011), p. 350.

<sup>230</sup> Nic Dhaíbhéid, 'The Irish National Aid Association'; Brian Murphy, 'Telling the Story of 1916: The "Catholic Bulletin" and "Studies"', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 101.401 (2012), 47–56

<sup>231</sup> Alan Finlayson, 'Sexuality and nationality: gendered discourses of Ireland', in *Politics of Sexuality: Identity, Gender, Citizenship*, ed. by Terrell Carver and Véronique Mottier (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 91-101 (pp. 92-5).

<sup>232</sup> 'Events of Easter Week', *Catholic Bulletin*, February 1917, pp. 125-30.

Markievicz's class to frame her as an example of respectable Irish womanhood, the *Catholic Bulletin* used the same technique of studio photography to foreground Markievicz's identity as a mother. The first photograph of Markievicz was published in the July 1917 issue, which focused on imprisoned participants of the Easter Rising. As seen in Figure 2.5, this feature also included photographs of Eamon de Valera, Eoin MacNeill and Diarmuid Lynch. The inclusion of Markievicz alongside the male participants was a departure for the *Catholic Bulletin*, and in particular, her inclusion in the male-coded space of the imprisoned martyr, rather than the more conventionally feminine mourner or waiting wife, complicated the gendered narrative cultivated by the *Catholic Bulletin*. Through photography, the *Catholic Bulletin* sought to re-constitute her within a framework of normative femininity, while simultaneously erasing the experiences of women who like Markievicz had been imprisoned for their role in the Rising.



**Figure 2.5** Catholic Bulletin, 'Events of Easter Week', 1917, p. 463. Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin.

Figure 2.5 reproduced a 1904 photograph by Lafayette Studios which visualised Markievicz alongside her two children. In the photograph, she gazes serenely at the camera, her pose maternal as she interlinks her hand with her daughter's and wraps her arm around her stepson, holding him close to her. The pictorial style and flowers positioned on her lap further reinforced the feminine aura of the image, a tenderness that is absent from the other photographs in the issue. This image was taken prior to Markievicz's entry into the nationalist movement in 1908 and it positioned her as an idealised, aristocratic mother, in contrast to her revolutionary portraiture.<sup>233</sup> The explicit domesticity of Markievicz's photograph is jarring in comparison to the other portraits on the page, particularly the militaristic photograph of Eamon de Valera. Photographed individually, these other images belong to a masculine tradition of portraiture that imparted a sense of authority and respectability onto the sitter, whereas Markievicz's respectability derived from her role in the domestic family. Positioned together, the photographs of Markievicz and de Valera articulated the gendered ideology of nationalism constructed by the *Catholic Bulletin*, where men were the agents of nationalism fighting for liberation and women were reproducers of the nation, passing on nationalist ideals and culture in the home.<sup>234</sup> Markievicz's portrait therefore reinforced the gendered mythos of Irish nationalism, where the allegorical Mother Ireland and the self-sacrificing Irish mother were conflated, obliterating the diverse reality of women's experiences of the revolution in order to perpetuate the ideology of Catholic femininity.<sup>235</sup> This conflation of revolutionary women into a model of heroic motherhood is also seen during the Spanish Civil War, where the PCE constructed a political rhetoric in which women's participation centred on their role as mothers sacrificing their sons for the Republic, rather than their own activism.<sup>236</sup> Both Ireland and Spain are examples of what Valentine Moghadam describes as the 'women in the family model' of revolution, where the roles of women in making revolution are rolled back by new regimes who instead construct ideologies of gender difference.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Markievicz became actively involved in nationalist politics in 1908 when she joined Inghinidhe na hÉireann, though prior to this she had been politically active within the suffrage movement. Lauren Arrington, *Revolutionary Lives: Constance and Casimir Markievicz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 51.

<sup>234</sup> Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, p. 29. See also Shelley Feldman who argues that the construction of nationalist ideology depends upon positioning women as symbols of the nation and men as active agents, Shelley Feldman, 'Feminist Interruptions: The Silence of East Bengal in the Story of Partition', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 1.2 (1999), 167-82, pp. 177-8.

<sup>235</sup> Geraldine Meaney, *Sex and Nation: Women in Irish Culture and Politics*, (Dublin: Attic Press, 1991), pp. 3-4.

<sup>236</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 55-8. Indeed, after 1939, women's position as specifically Catholic mothers would be embedded into the doctrine and legislation of the new Spanish state—however, Republican women were frequently excluded from this role and regarded as 'unsuitable' or 'unworthy' mothers because of their political affiliation.

<sup>237</sup> Valentine Moghadam, 'Gender and Revolutions', in *Theorizing Revolutions*, ed. by John Foran (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 133-62, (p. 137).

The biographical vignette accompanying the photo also reflected the displacement of Markievicz's militarised femininity and revolutionary participation, as it minimised Markievicz's political militancy by reframing it as an extension of domestic duty and charity, an interpretation that would dominate how Markievicz was perceived after her death.<sup>238</sup> It also reinforces the catholicisation of the Easter Rising, as it describes Markievicz as suffering immensely under the brutality of her British imprisonment but finding solace in her newly converted Catholic faith.<sup>239</sup> For women, public recognition of victimhood is tied to conforming to ideals of femininity: in order for Markievicz's imprisonment to be acceptable within a framework of gendered nationalism, she had to be defined as an example of suffering Catholic motherhood rather than a revolutionary, a process also seen in how the Francoist government honoured and commemorated Nationalist women after the Spanish Civil War.<sup>240</sup>

After her death, Markievicz's respectability continued to be defined through imposing sentiments of domesticity onto her actions and motivations for revolution.<sup>241</sup> In 1932, a bust of Markievicz was erected in St. Stephen's Park in Dublin. While the statue referenced her militant activism through depicting Markievicz in her ICA uniform, the unveiling ceremony and dedication by Eamon de Valera embedded Markievicz's memory within the framework of traditional, Catholic femininity. He described her as 'a strange figure, following a path of her own... but the friends who knew her knew that she did that because she was truly a woman'.<sup>242</sup> Within this account, her engagement in revolutionary activism and the ICA had been motivated not by politics or her long-standing commitment to socialism, but by a 'love of her kind'.<sup>243</sup> Markievicz could only be claimed within the Irish revolutionary mythology when she was redefined within normative narratives of Irish femininity—yet, scores of militant women, Markievicz's republican comrades, challenged this depiction and asserted their own interpretation of Markievicz. Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, a prominent feminist and socialist activist, condemned de Valera's speech as an *apologia* that attempted to conventionalise and erase Markievicz's radical spirit and militancy.

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<sup>238</sup> Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, p. 32.

<sup>239</sup> Senia Pašeta has highlighted how women's revolutionary activism was primarily discussed in religious periodicals, which framed their participation in line with the expectations of Catholic femininity, thus denying agency. Pašeta, p.11.

<sup>240</sup> Emma Dolan discusses the politics of recognising women's victimhood in Emma Dolan, 'The "Comfort Women" Apologies: Gendered victimhood and the Politics of Grievability' in *Re-Writing Women as Victims: From Theory to Practice*, ed. by María José Gámez Fuentes, Sonia Núñez Puente and Emma Gómez Nicolau (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 24-36, (pp. 27-8). For discussion on how Francoist commemoration of women centred on Catholic femininity see: Rodríguez López and Cazorla Sánchez, p. 703.

<sup>241</sup> Arrington, pp. 265-8.

<sup>242</sup> Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, p. 33.

<sup>243</sup> De Valera's speech is described in Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington's article on the event. Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, *An Phoblacht*, 'Constance Markievicz- What She Stood For', 16 July 1936.



**Figure 2.6**, Seamus Murphy, *Bust of Constance Markievicz*, (1954 replication of original from 1932), bronze, Dublin. Courtesy of Fáilte Ireland and Dublin City Library and Archive.

The picture painted by Eamon de Valera of labour's revolutionary heroine is conventionalised beyond recognition. It resembles those portraits by “studio artists” that improve away the real features of the sitter, smoothing out the wrinkles and furrows for a touched-up image of their own, the image of a chocolate-box heroine.

Using a photographic metaphor that evoked Markievicz as having been supplanted by the familial studio portrait of her as a young aristocrat, Sheehy-Skeffington rejected the interpretation put forth by de Valera and proposed an alternative gaze, framing her as ‘Ireland’s Joan of Arc’, with no trace of the ‘sheltered femininity of the drawing room type’.<sup>244</sup> Finally, Sheehy-Skeffington argues that Markievicz’s revolutionary legacy could only be appreciated by ‘a Connolly or a Mellows or one of the valiant women of the Citizen Army, her comrades in arms’, a positioning that explicitly constructed an alternative narrative of revolutionary history that rejected the patriarchal foundation of de Valera’s interpretation.<sup>245</sup> Throughout the revolutionary period and its aftermath, photographs of Markievicz were used

<sup>244</sup> Sheehy-Skeffington, ‘Constance Markievicz’.

<sup>245</sup> Sheehy-Skeffington, ‘Constance Markievicz’.

to construct and subvert narratives of femininity, revolution and nationalism, and they built a complex way of seeing women during war. Yet, it was not only 'extraordinary' women like Markievicz who were used to embody the ideals of Catholic, nationalist femininity. As I will explore in the next section, photographs of ordinary women were circulated to reinforce this idealisation of Irish womanhood.

## 2.2 Political Mourning: The Politics of Visibility in the Irish Press during the War of Independence and the Civil War, 1919-23.



**Figure 2.7**, J. J O'Kelly, 'Events of Easter Week', *Catholic Bulletin*, December 1916. Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin.

In December 1916 J.J O'Kelly, the editor of the *Catholic Bulletin*, commissioned 17 studio portraits from the Dublin-based studio photographer Thomas Francis Geoghegan for an article designed to raise funds for prisoners' support and welfare. These photographs pictured the women widowed following the Easter Rising along with their children, replicating the composition of the standard familial portrait to mark the noted absence of the father or

husband figure, who had been executed or imprisoned for his role in the rebellion.<sup>246</sup> This feature included families of both well-known leaders and ordinary volunteers of the ICA, notably including photographs of Kathleen Clarke, Nora Connolly and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington; women who had been active as political militants in nationalism, suffrage and labour. The editorial decision to frame these women, who had participated in the Rising, within the archetypes of the idealised mother and wife highlights the centrality of domestic ideologies in the construction of Irish nationalism. Within Irish nationalism, women have been considered as ‘curators of memory’, excluded from commemoration and yet expected to maintain it—a contradiction that highlights the complex role of women within the cultural narratives of war.<sup>247</sup> As Figure 2.7 shows, the *Catholic Bulletin* used images of grief and mourning to redefine militant women within narratives of domestic femininity, while excluding their voices in the publication itself. These images of domestic mourning are key to understanding how the Irish press represented women’s roles in conflict: placing them as passive, grieving bystanders to war, peripheral to the heroism of men who define and describe war.<sup>248</sup> Additionally, they framed women as victims rather than participants of the revolution, a framework that would later dominate how women were seen during the later revolutionary period.

Within mourning practices, the female body was used as a site to mark the absence of the dead and the public performance of mourning rituals was a way to reinforce the respectable femininity of the mourner. The black clothes and solemn demeanour of Mrs MacDowell and her children in Figure 2.7 demonstrate how this performative aspect of mourning reinforced the gendered ideology of Irish femininity.<sup>249</sup> During war, photographs of grieving women are used to represent a collective narrative of national loss, with women once-again photographed as an allegory.<sup>250</sup> Throughout the War of Independence, photographs of mourning women were reproduced in the press, building on the iconographic tradition of women representing the nation during conflict.<sup>251</sup> Characterising photographic depictions of grief and war, Marta Zarzycka notes that women’s grief is rendered into objectified

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<sup>246</sup> Fitzpatrick, p. 83.

<sup>247</sup> Roisín Higgins, ‘Curators of Memory: Women and the Centenary of the Easter Rising’, in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations* ed. by Oona Frawley, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2021), pp. 205-19, (p. 211).

<sup>248</sup> Elshtain, p. 164.

<sup>249</sup> Melissa Zielke, ‘Forget-Me-Nots: Victorian Women, Mourning and the Construction of a Feminine Historical Memory’, *Material History Review*, 58 (2003), 52-66, p. 56. See also Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), p. 83.

<sup>250</sup> Marta Zarzycka, *Gendered Tropes in War Photography: Mothers, Mourners, Soldiers* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 2.

<sup>251</sup> Marta Zarzycka, ‘Madonnas of Warfare, Angels of Poverty: Cutting through Press Photographs’, *Photographies*, 5.1 (2012), 71-85, p. 75.

melancholia and the subjects transformed into silent witnesses of trauma, a process that can be seen in Figure 2.7, whereas masculine mourning is staged as a protest.<sup>252</sup> In Figure 2.8, the women of Cumann na mBan transformed mourning into a political tool to protest against British executions of Irish revolutionaries.



**Figure 2.8**, W.D Hogan, *Cumann na mBan reciting the rosary in their ranks outside Mountjoy, 1921*, photograph. Courtesy of National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

Unlike the *Catholic Bulletin* photographs that positioned the viewer as spectators to acts of private mourning, the composition of the Cumann na mBan photo engaged the audience in a collective action of protest. Figure 2.8 depicts a procession of women in Cumann na mBan uniforms praying the rosary outside Mountjoy Jail on the day of IRA volunteer Thomas Traynor's execution. Five women led the protest, with some looking down as they focus on praying while others looked directly at the camera with authoritative gaze. In contrast to other press photographs published during the War of Independence, women's presence dominated the scene, with the only male figure present photographed out of focus on the margins of the image. Photographed by W.D Hogan, a news photographer who would later go on to work as a propagandist for the Irish Free State, it was published in the *Freeman's Journal* on 26<sup>th</sup> April

<sup>252</sup> Zarzycka, *Gendered Tropes*, pp. 2-7

1921 in a section titled 'After the Execution'. The caption accompanying the photograph described the scene as 'another section of the Cumann na mBan reciting the Rosary after the execution had taken place'.<sup>253</sup> Cumann na mBan had organised a vigil for Traynor on the day of his execution, marching in formation through the city until they reached Mountjoy Jail and recited the rosary in Irish. After the execution, they printed posters with Traynor's final words and pasted them up across Dublin, in another example of the diversity of women's militancy during conflict.

During the War of Independence, Cumann na mBan's military success depended on the assumption of non-threatening femininity; as they transported weapons, provided safe houses and medical care for men on the run, acted as couriers and spies, and performed combat support roles in plain sight of the British military.<sup>254</sup> Similarly, Cumann na mBan used this performance of femininity to exploit gendered conventions of mourning and transformed themselves into visual spectacles.<sup>255</sup> They subverted how grieving women were seen during war, using this gaze to mount political protests that played on women's moral authority to mourn, to witness and to commemorate. Communities of militant women held vigils outside prisons, led processions and dressed corpses, thus subverting traditions of Catholic femininity by utilising them as performative acts of political militancy.<sup>256</sup> As the Irish press remained under censorship and many nationalist men were in hiding or imprisoned, the publication of these photographs of mourning women in the press signified a broader outrage and protest over the actions of the British state in Ireland. The respectability of the performance of feminine mourning allowed for clandestine expressions of nationalist propaganda—actions that could only be seen when performed by women. The photograph of the mourning Cumann na mBan women also highlighted the unity and respectability of the movement, as they marched in distinct lines with clean and tidy uniforms, holding rosaries in a demonstration of Catholic respectability. This granted them both a moral authority and political agency, positioning Cumann na mBan as a legitimate movement within Irish nationalism, in opposition to attempts to frame women's militancy and activism as peripheral to revolutionary nationalism. Women's militancy depended on continual negotiation between

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<sup>253</sup> Unknown, 'After the Execution', *The Freeman's Journal*, 26 April 1921.

<sup>254</sup> Borgonovo, p. 70. See also Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, pp. 142-52.

<sup>255</sup> Borgonov, pp. 72-3.

<sup>256</sup> For a similar example of how Catholic iconography of grieving mothers was used within political protest see: Diana Taylor, 'Making a Spectacle: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo', *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, 3.2 (2001), 97-109, p. 101.

performing and subverting gendered expectations of nationalist femininity, a delicate balancing act that would come undone during the Civil War.

During the Civil War (1922-3), women became the public face of republican militancy, a change that can be traced through their presence in funeral photography. As negotiations for a truce between the British government and the Irish rebels began in July 1921, Cumann na mBan became one of the most outspoken groups to oppose it.<sup>257</sup> Within the Dáil, women levied their connections to the martyred leaders of 1916 to demand a rejection of the terms of peace, while Cumann na mBan women disrupted pro-Treaty rallies by setting platforms on fire and snatching flags from speakers. As civil war broke out in June 1922, women took on an actively militaristic visibility, which threatened the gendered mythology of Irish nationalism. Women performed military parades and protests in public spaces, while republican propaganda circulated the figure of the armed Cumann na mBan woman as the face of Irish women's nationalism.<sup>258</sup> While funerals had always functioned as propaganda exercises in the Irish republican movement, the changing dynamics of the Irish Civil War allowed women to adopt a more prominent role in these spectacles.<sup>259</sup> Cumann na mBan adopted a more masculine presentation where they provided guards of honour, carried coffins and fired rifle shots over the grave.

In Figure 2.9, a photograph taken by an observer of IRA leader Cathal Brugha's funeral, the women of Cumann na mBan provide a guard of honour for Brugha, a military leader who died in July 1922. The photograph depicted a line of women in matching uniforms standing tall with their heads held high as they wait for the procession to pass them. Unlike in Figure 2.8, they did not hold rosary beads or perform traditionally feminine mourning practices; instead they took on the military duties previously performed by the IRA. While Cumann na mBan continued to use funerals as a site of militant spectacle, with uniformed women marching in processions through the streets and firing ceremonial volleys at the gravesides of deceased soldiers, these were not publicly photographed. Unlike the widely circulated Figure 2.8, Figure 2.9 was a private photograph shot by an onlooker, Dr. Brooks, which was then donated to Kilmainham Gaol during its reconstruction in the 1960s.

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<sup>257</sup> Clark, p. 2.

<sup>258</sup> Claire Dubois, 'Constance Markievicz's Politics of Dissensus', *Nordic Irish Studies*, 18 (2019), 96-127, p. 119.

<sup>259</sup> John Borgonovo, 'Political Percussions: Cork Brass Bands and the Irish Revolution, 1914-1922' in *Public Performances: Studies in the Carnivalesque and Ritualesque*, ed. by Jack Santino (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017), pp. 93-112.



**Figure 2.9**, Dr. Brooks, *Cumann na mBan Guard of Honour*, 1922, photograph. Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin.

As a result, it has not been widely seen beyond the archive. The dynamics of circulation between these two mourning photographs highlight that while women sought to make themselves visible, their efforts were only recorded and circulated within the press if it conformed to the ideals of Catholicised, Irish femininity. Indeed, their public, visual performance of militarised femininity amplified cultural anxiety over women's participation, and was used by the Irish Free State as evidence of the illegitimacy and degeneracy of the anti-Treaty forces, which I will discuss further in the next chapter.

Roisín Higgins has argued that the role of Irish women in tending to the memories of martyred men engendered their own invisibility.<sup>260</sup> However, the evidence presented above demonstrates that the public visibility and recognition offered by the feminine performance of mourning allowed women to position themselves as political agents within Irish nationalism. The production of this visibility was complex and entwined with gendered politics of respectability. Militant women negotiated between adhering to the nationalist femininity deemed acceptable within the revolutionary narrative—that is to say, a passive femininity in which women were seen as victims of war—and militarised femininity. The circulation of

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<sup>260</sup> Higgins, 'Curators of Memory', pp. 211-4.

these images, however, reveals the complexities of photographing women's militancy and its subversion of gendered conventions. While militant women's radical mourning was tolerated during the War of Independence and circulated across the mainstream Irish press, photographs of these same militant practices during the Civil War were excluded from the public press as the state actively redefined Irish femininity in order to exclude these practices and disown the militant women who performed them. However, as I will discuss in this next section, women also used their photographic practices to construct their own militant identities that challenged the parameters of Irish womanhood established by the state and the press.

### 2.3      **Photographing Militant Identities: Cumann na mBan and the Self-Construction of Women's Militancy, 1916-1921**

While women's militancy was continually redefined within public narratives of war, women commissioned and produced photographs throughout the entire revolutionary conflict that celebrated their militancy and challenged patriarchal efforts to erase them.<sup>261</sup> These photographic objects have been overlooked in previous histories of women's participation in nationalism, despite the untapped potential they hold in understanding how Irish women fashioned and constructed their own militant identity alongside the visual mores of respectability. As discussed earlier, studio photography was used by the mainstream Irish press and commercial photography studios as a tool to enforce a gender-delineated rhetoric of Irish nationalism. Photographs of militant women were only circulated within public networks of the press when their presentation conformed to existing narratives of gendered domesticity, or when they were used to signify the deviancy of republican womanhood during the civil war. However, studio portraits commissioned by Irish militant women, which highlighted their militancy and membership of revolutionary organisations such as Cumann na mBan and the ICA, demonstrate how they challenged this way of being seen.<sup>262</sup> In Ireland, studio photography was an important social ritual to commemorate and display moments of importance and achievement, with carefully composed images of familial domesticity hung in

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<sup>261</sup> These photographs are part of a larger range of material made and distributed by women that focused on their militancy and experiences of war. For example, Margaret Skinnider published one of the first eye-witness accounts of the Easter Rising in 1917 and Margaret Buckley later published her own account of the Civil War and her imprisonment in 1938.

<sup>262</sup> Studio photography was a space for women to construct their own identities, as discussed in Sophie Feyder, 'A Space of One's Own: Studio Photography and the Making of Black Urban Femininities in the 1950s East Rand', *Safundi*, 15.2-3 (2014), 227-54, p. 229.

homes, published in the local press and circulated amongst family networks.<sup>263</sup> However, militant women subverted the gendered politics of studio portraiture; while conventional practices of studio photography were intended to reproduce normative ideologies of gender, the studio portraits of Cumann na mBan women challenged the boundaries of acceptable femininity by constructing a respectable vision of militant femininity.



**Figure 2.10** Unknown, *Portrait of May Gibney*, c. 1920, photograph, Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin.

Figure 2.10, a studio portrait of May Gibney by an unidentified photographer, provides an example of how women negotiated the construction of their militant identities. Gibney was an active member of the Ard Craobh brigade of Cumann na mBan throughout the entirety of the revolutionary period. She provided safe houses for wanted men during the War of

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<sup>263</sup> Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, p. 80. Hanna frames the commissioning and circulation of studio photography as part of the invisible labour of women in the domestic sphere and notes that women were the most frequent customers of photographic studios.

Independence, transported important documents of high-ranking IRA officers, and stored arms, ammunition and bombs for the IRA during the Civil War before being arrested in May 1923.<sup>264</sup> While Gibney's portrait does not share the same signifiers of militancy as seen in the Keogh Brothers' portrait of Markievicz (Figure 2.3), it nevertheless represents another example of how women used photography to commemorate their militancy. Posing in front of a painted background in the photographer's studio, Gibney wore her Cumann na mBan uniform, announcing an explicit affiliation to the pursuit of Irish independence.<sup>265</sup> Gibney's portrait subverted the domestic ideology presented in the public circulation of photographs of women's militancy; and she presented herself as an active participant in the nationalist struggle.

Yet, even when positioned within the framework of radical militancy, Gibney's portrait displayed signifiers of respectable femininity. In the head and shoulders shot, she appears demure, her face turned towards the camera with a serene gaze. Her uniform is partially undone, lessening the militaristic association of the clothes and feminising her appearance, but the metal pin on her right lapel clearly identifies her membership of the organisation. Her hand is prominently displayed, her fingers pale and smooth. As Erika Hanna has discussed, hands were an important signifier of middle-class femininity in Irish studio photography, and studio photographers treated the images to conform more closely to these visual ideals.<sup>266</sup> It is likely that Gibney's hand and face have been edited with pencil and masking fluid, her hand smoothed out and shadows added to her face to define her cheekbones and jawline. The prominence of her hands also highlighted the presence of an engagement ring worn on her ring finger. This was given to her by her late fiance, Brigadier Dick McKee, who was executed by the British army on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 1920 as a reprisal for the earlier shooting of 14 British officers.<sup>267</sup> In wearing the ring, Gibney connected herself to a broader tradition of political activism, where women invoked the memory of their dead relatives and partners to grant themselves legitimacy and moral authority, gaining agency through the dead.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Dublin, Bureau Military History, Witness Statement P34 REF22364 (Maura O'Neill nee Gibney).

<sup>265</sup> Indeed, during the Civil War Cumann na mBan was a banned organisation. While this portrait has been dated between 1920-3, the exact date of production is unclear. Gibney's uniform could hold more subversive potential if this portrait was taken while Cumann na mBan membership was illegal.

<sup>266</sup> Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, p. 76.

<sup>267</sup> Anne Dolan, 'Killing and Bloody Sunday, November 1920', *Historical Journal*, 49.3 (2006), 789-810, p. 791. Additional reprisals from the British forces included the shooting of a crowd in Croke Park, where 12 were killed and 60 injured.

<sup>268</sup> Knirck, 'Ghosts and Realities'.



**Figure 2.11**, Unknown, *Portrait of Emily Elliot*, c. 1916, photograph, Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin.

Gibney's portrait is only one of a mass of images that represent how women constructed their own visual, militant identity. These photographs were part of the tradition of studio portraiture marking important events and achievements, with participation in the fight for independence perceived as on par with other, more commonly celebrated events such as marriages and births.<sup>269</sup> Given the dismissal of women's experiences of militancy during the revolutionary period, formalised in the widespread rejection of their pension requests, these portraits commemorating their action would often be the only recognition given to them.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Rebecca Preston, "Hope You Will Be Able To Recognise us": The Representation of Women and Gardens in Early Twentieth-Century British Domestic "Real Photo" Postcards', *Women's History Review*, 18.5 (2009), 781-800, p. 797.

<sup>270</sup> As Marie Coleman has discussed, women were systematically denied recognition and compensation for their part in the war. Coleman, 'Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries', p. 915.

Figure 2.11, commissioned by Emily Elliot to commemorate her participation in the revolt, is a key example of how militant women practiced photography as a form of remembrance. Elliot was active during the Easter Rising, where she served in the Four Courts, primarily providing nursing and first aid services.<sup>271</sup> Her portrait reflects this service; in the photograph, Elliot stands tall, wearing a Cumann na mBan uniform with a Red Cross armband on her right arm to highlight her participation as a nurse. Much like Gibney, her hands and face have been smoothed, and she smiles towards the camera.

Militant women's photographic practices are key to re-asserting the presence of women in the revolutionary period after the widespread erasure of their actions. As Rebecca Preston discusses in her analysis of picture postcards, 'each small act in the life of a portrait may be seen as part of an ongoing process of constructing identity'.<sup>272</sup> Tracing the material circulation of this portrait from Elliot's home to the archive of Kilmainham Gaol establishes not only evidence of how women constructed their own revolutionary identity through photography, but also how these images held an emotional significance in asserting women's presence in the revolutionary narrative and demanding recognition in the face of institutional denial. Elliot's multiple pension applications demonstrate her difficulty in getting financial recognition for her service and the lingering effects it had on her, which included temporary homelessness, loss of her business, and chronic illness. Elliot commissioned this photograph as a celebration of her participation in the revolutionary struggle, yet as time wore on and the Irish state refused to recognise her participation, it became a visual reminder of her service. Later still, it would become an object of resistance towards the state who continuously denied her status as a veteran when Elliot donated it to Kilmainham Gaol in 1973. Elliot decided to donate this photograph after she visited the museum with her family and recognised herself in a group photograph of Cumann na mBan women. Seeing herself reflected in this image 'awakened many memories of the wonderful time' and she later arranged the donation of this portrait along with a letter testifying to her service during the Easter Rising.<sup>273</sup> In transferring the image from the private space of her home to the public archive, Emily Elliot re-asserted control over her exclusion from the nationalist mythology of the Irish state. Even though she could not control how this photograph would be used to remember her role, her donation of the portrait meant that she could now be recognised and remembered for her role in the Easter Rising.

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<sup>271</sup> Dublin, Bureau Military History, Witness Statement P34 REF9307 Emily Ledwith (nee Elliot). Elliot was afforded a pension for her active service during Easter Week 1916, but her subsequent requests for a Military Disability pension were denied.

<sup>272</sup> Preston, p. 786

<sup>273</sup> Dublin, Kilmainham Gaol, Manuscript 17PO 1A24 17.

Women continued to use photography to define their revolutionary identity during the War of Independence. Speaking on an American tour in the lull before the Civil War, Constance Markievicz reflected on the crucial role played by women during the War of Independence:

The work of the girls of Cumann na mBan was fine...it says a great deal for their cleverness that so few of them were ever caught, and many of the best girls were never even suspected.<sup>274</sup>

During the War of Independence, women's success depended upon going unnoticed and on not being seen. At the height of the War of Independence in 1921, Cumann na mBan membership reached its peak with 800 branches mobilised throughout the country, yet only around 50 women were imprisoned.<sup>275</sup> This reflected both the difficulty in gathering evidence of women's involvement and how the British military forces predominantly viewed women as sympathisers to the nationalist movement rather than active participants. The performance of normative femininity allowed women to go unnoticed, smuggling ammunition and weapons underneath skirts and shawls. This invisibility was also the site of tension: while it protected women from the widespread arrests and imprisonment facing men, it also denied them recognition of their actions during the war as well as hiding the political reprisals and gender-based violence that these women endured.<sup>276</sup> Press photography during this period reinforced the gendered boundaries of war, constructing an ideological narrative that pictured women within the gendered discourse of mourners and as victims, rather than as militants.<sup>277</sup> In positioning women on the periphery of war, the mainstream narrative continued to position Irish women as peripheral to the revolutionary narrative, a perspective that was challenged in women's private photographic practices.

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<sup>274</sup> Quoted from Karen Steele, 'Gender and the Postcolonial Archive', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 10.1 (2010), 55-61, p. 59.

<sup>275</sup> Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, p. 145.

<sup>276</sup> Ryan, *Gender and the Press*, p. 209. For further information on gendered violence during the War of Independence see: Linda Connolly, 'Sexual Violence in the Irish Civil War: A Forgotten War Crime?', *Women's History Review*, 30.1 (2021), 126-43; Lindsay Earner-Byrne, 'The Rape of Mary M.: A Microhistory of Sexual Violence and Moral Redemption in 1920s Ireland', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 24.1 (2015), 75-98; Susan Byrne, '"Keeping Company with the Enemy": Gender and Sexual Violence against Women during the Irish War of Independence and Civil War, 1919-1923', *Women's History Review*, 30.1 (2021), 108-125.

<sup>277</sup> Louise Ryan's insightful analysis of national and provincial press throughout the War of Independence highlights how graphic accounts of violence against women were used to establish the brutality and illegitimate violence of the British military forces. The increased coverage of attacks on women were used to generate outrage and condemn the British occupation in Ireland in a covert display of support. Ryan, *Gender and the Press*, pp. 209-11. See also: Mary McAuliffe, 'Remembered for Being Forgotten: The Women of 1916, Memory and Commemoration' in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*, ed. by Oona Frawley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021), pp. 22-40 (pp. 25-6).

In July 1921, the British government called for a truce as they entered into negotiations to end the war. During this time, the IRA and Cumann na mBan set up shared training camps that instructed members in the care of weapons, drilling, first aid and other tasks necessary to the infrastructure of guerrilla warfare. During this time, women produced photographs of themselves and their comrades, an example of which can be seen in Figure 2.12, which were not widely circulated in public networks. I argue that these images are an example of how women used photography to negotiate between their desire to visually mark and commemorate their participation and the need for public invisibility.



**Figure 2.12**, Unknown, *Training Camp*, c. 1922-3, photograph, Mercier Archives. Reproduced from Liz Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution*, p. 141.

Figure 2.12, taken in a training camp in Ballinard, Co. Tipperary, showed three women and two men posing in front of a building. The three women are sat in the foreground of the

picture with the men stood behind them, mimicking an arrangement common to composition of studio photographs.

The three women smiled at the camera, their feminine attire at odds with guns in their hands. They held the guns casually yet carefully, highlighting their familiarity in handling weapons. The two men behind them wore a dinner suit and a military uniform respectively, at ease with the display of militarised femininity in front of them. There is a sense of companionship and camaraderie within the image, which imbued the snapshot with a sense of emotional significance as these women showed their pride in their revolutionary identity and training. The photograph challenges the gendered discourse of Irish nationalism, showing women as active agents in the conflict with the men behind supporting them. This is a reversal of the nationalist conceptualisation of the nurturing woman as a 'Mother Ireland' figure and the man as a loyal soldier, demonstrating that attitudes towards gender were not monolithic in the nationalist movement, and indeed, how, like in Republican Spain, normative gendered roles could expand to include militant action during times of need. Yet, the continued circulation of this image, in photo-books such as Gillis' *Women of the Irish Revolution*, reflects the tension within these images. In the image's journey from private album to archive, the identity of its subjects has been lost. This detaches the image from the meanings imparted upon it by the photographer, and it is reproduced not as a photograph of individuals, but as part of a disparate collection of photographs that uncritically make women visible as symbols and anonymous images.

While women's public photographic presence during the 1916-21 period relied on their adherence to conventional narratives of femininity, the emergence of more militarised femininity during the Civil War disrupted these narratives, as women took over public roles while the anti-treaty forces went on the run. Being photographed as active participants in the civil war challenged the parameters of women's roles in conflict, a rupture that exposed the contentious position held by Irish militant women. The resulting anxiety from the increased militant presence of Cumann na mBan women manifested as attacks on their moral character in the pro-Treaty press, which encompassed the majority of mainstream outlets, as well as increased arrests and detainment of militant women—a process echoed in Republican Spain.<sup>278</sup> The mainstream press highlighted women's engagement with violence, with articles describing women as throwing bombs and carrying guns; actions that disturbed both ideological concepts of acceptable feminine behaviour and wartime conduct. The press focused on how republican women transgressed these boundaries of conflict and how in

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<sup>278</sup> Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, pp. 212-18.

doing so they erased their femininity—even though many of their activities, such as smuggling weapons and ammunition, were a continuation of their undercover duties during the War of Independence. This position was echoed by Free State politicians who decried republican militant women as deviant, bloodthirsty and unfeminine, with President Cosgrave declaring that they should have ‘rosaries in their hands or be at home with knitting needles’.<sup>279</sup> The reference to carrying rosaries draws a comparison to Figure 2.8 where women’s militancy was couched in the performance of religious femininity; a sign that the public participation and recognition of women’s militancy was only allowed while it conformed to traditional expectations of Catholicised, domestic femininity. This dichotomous approach to femininity was also present in how Spanish militant women were seen in the Nationalist press, with both the Francoist regime and the Irish Free State contrasting women’s active participation in war to the idealised Catholic femininity of women.

The active and visible involvement of women militants threatened the stability of patriarchal gendered relations on both sides of the Civil War. In framing Cumann na mBan as a disorderly and destructive presence, the state and press used women’s militancy as a tool to delegitimise the anti-Treaty republican movement. In response to this, the republican clandestine press framed women as victims of Free State brutality, denying the involvement of republican women in combat or violent protest and reinscribing them within a gendered rhetoric of war.<sup>280</sup> Discussion on their involvement in the civil war, which did in fact encompass violent resistance, was limited to domestic activism, such as first aid and providing safe houses. After the Civil War, male republicans continued to deny agency and recognition to militant women, embedding their erasure into the revolutionary mythos of Ireland.<sup>281</sup>

Throughout the entirety of the revolutionary period, and its aftermath, Irish militant women have used photography to assert their presence within the revolutionary narrative. While these photographs have been continually reproduced to signify women’s involvement in the revolution, they have not been analysed as a collective expression of a militant identity or as artefacts of resistance, but rather used to illustrate articles and photobooks.<sup>282</sup> It is crucial to understand the production and circulation of these images, as they were created to resist against women’s exclusion from the historical narrative of war built by the state and the press

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<sup>279</sup> Cosgrave quoted from Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, p. 213.

<sup>280</sup> Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, p. 232. This process of delegitimisation through being positioned as victims would also be enacted on Republican women in Spain, as discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>281</sup> Ryan, ‘Splendidly Silent’, pp. 33-4.

<sup>282</sup> For more on the problematic reproduction of war photography into illustrated collections, see Justin Court, ‘Picturing History, Remembering Soldiers: World War I Photography between the Public and the Private’, *History and Memory*, 29.1 (2017), 72-103.

during the revolutionary period. It is not that these women were invisible or silent, but rather that they were unrecognised and unheard—a distinction that is critical in recognising the agency of women who have been deliberately marginalised in the construction of history.

#### 2.4 Revolutionary Metaphors: Deconstructing the Symbol of the Spanish Militiawoman in Political Postcards, 1936



**Figure 2.13**, Antoni Campaña, *Barricada, Hospital Street, Barcelona*, 1936, photograph. Courtesy of Arixu Campaña, Barcelona.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1936, the Catalan photographer Antoni Campaña shot an image that would define the revolutionary aesthetic of the Spanish Civil War. As seen in Figure 2.13, a young woman stands before an anarchist CNT-FAI (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo-Federación Anarquista Ibérica) flag, her clenched fist raised high in a show of anti-fascist defiance. Tonally, it is reminiscent of Eugene Delacroix's painting 'Liberty Leading The People', drawing on the iconographic tradition of women representing both revolutionary

ideals and acting as symbols of the nation.<sup>283</sup> She smiles as she gazes at something beyond the frame of the photo, perhaps at the idea of a revolutionary future.<sup>284</sup> While in Ireland, women's photographic presence in political propaganda and postcards was visualised within gendered narratives of motherhood and mourning, Spanish militant women were embedded into the visual culture of the front in Spain. Yet, while Spanish militant women were initially seen more widely than their Irish counterparts, a similar narrative of redefinition and delegitimisation occurred as the war progressed. Following the attempted coup of July 1936, thousands of women enlisted in anti-fascist militias, and their mobilisation was heavily photographed by Spanish and international photojournalists. Amidst this fascination, the figure of the *miliciana* was codified—the beautiful revolutionary girl with a rifle who signified a collective ethos of anti-fascist defiance. She was adopted as a transnational figure of revolution and her image was reproduced across photographic prints, leaflets, posters, stamps and other memorabilia. Mary Nash positions this figure as a temporary symbolic propaganda tool that was active in the public imagination for only a short duration of the war; her revolutionary aesthetic designed for male consumption rather than to motivate women to deviate from gendered norms of conflict.<sup>285</sup>

Yet, the figure of the militant woman was more than a propagandistic tool designed to shame men into action. The photographic circulation and commodification of the militiawomen was an ideological tool of social control that shaped and embodied the nation.<sup>286</sup> In the Second Republic, where competing and contradictory ideologies intertwined and interacted with each other, photographs of women's militancy were a valuable currency to assert and deny different constructions of wartime femininities. Campaña's photograph, cropped and edited into the version pictured in Figure 2.14, was reproduced as the cover of a promotional photo-card album, made by the CNT-FAI in Barcelona for international

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<sup>283</sup> Warner, p. 292. As Warner argues, allegories of the female form inform and visualise national myths of revolution, yet their power lies in their metaphorical nature, rather than being a representation of an individual woman.

<sup>284</sup> Revolutionary iconography of women often evokes this distant gaze, which is particularly present in the figure of Marianne in Eugene Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830), a trope which has been adopted across different visual representations of female fighters. See: Arielle Gordon, 'From Guerrilla Girls to Zainabs: Reassessing the Figure of the "Militant Woman" in the Iranian Revolution', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 17.1 (2021), 64-95, pp. 72-4.

<sup>285</sup> Nash, pp. 50-4.

<sup>286</sup> Laura Wexler, 'Techniques of the Imaginary Nation: Engendering Family Photography' in *Race and the Production of Modern American Nationalism*, ed. by Reynolds Scott-Childress (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), pp. 359-82 (p. 369). Wexler's chapter proposes a new reading of Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities that addresses gender and photography, linking family photography with visions of white nationhood.

distribution in 1936 to provide 'better information about the revolutionary events in Spain'.<sup>287</sup> In line with traditions of revolutionary gendered iconography, which position women as symbols of nation, the militiawoman on the cover of the album is photographed as a revolutionary metaphor.<sup>288</sup> The postcard's increased contrast washed out the woman's features and rendered her within a more statuesque aesthetic. This is emphasised by the faded background, which was common to propagandistic montages. As in Ireland, both national and international support for the Republican cause was generated through print media and photographic memorabilia. However, while Ireland prioritised a gendered nationalism of militaristic masculinity and domestic femininity, initially Spanish materials actively included women as participants in the revolutionary process.



**Figure 2.14**, CNT-FAI, *La Lucha en Barcelona*, 1936, postcard, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca.

<sup>287</sup> Salamanca, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Manuscript T115. The back of the postcard reads: 'Para mayor informar sobre los acontecimientos revolucionarios de España, la CONFEDERACIÓN NACIONAL DEL TRABAJO y la FEDERACIÓN ANARQUISTA IBERICA editan estos documentos gráficos. La lucha en Barcelona es el primer álbum de la serie que tenemos en preparación. Cada uno contendrá una maravilla diferente, cuya variada colección formará un importantísimo documento.' This is translated into French, English and German, indicating the intended transnational circulation of the object.

<sup>288</sup> For more on gender and revolutionary iconography see Cuesta and Johnson, p. 417; Gordon, p. 66.

However, these photographs must not be conflated with agency or empowerment.<sup>289</sup> As Figure 2.15 demonstrates, photography of militiawomen also maintained gendered narratives of war. Whilst the cover of this collection promoted ideals of gendered resistance and social revolution, the interior images conform more to traditional dichotomies of femininity and masculinity. In the ten postcards included in the collection, six promote the ideals of militaristic masculinity, with documentary photographs of men training, repairing and using weapons. The only other images to include women focus on more domestic activities: in one photographic vignette entitled 'Mess for the Militia', women and men share food at a table, with women serving the food. The other image focused on women's role as mothers. Figure 2.15 depicts a woman says goodbye to her husband, who holds her in one arm, and their child and his rifle in the other. This image maintained the traditional gendered boundaries of war, with the masculine soldier journeying to the front while the woman, even though she is dressed in the militaristic uniform of the militiawoman, remained at home; a framing that reinforces the allegorical nature of Figure 2.15.



**Figure 2.15**, CNT-FAI, *La Despedida del miliciano*, 1936, postcard. Courtesy of Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca

<sup>289</sup> As Patricia Hayes argues on using uncritical visibility as a means of recovery, 'we immediately engage in a problematic zone, for the act of "making visible" can silence women further. Visibility does not necessarily mean "voice" or empowerment'. Hayes, p. 421.



**Figure 2.16**, Antoni Campaña, *Miliciana desplegando la bandera rojinegra de la libertad sobre una barricada de las Ramblas tras la victoria sobre los fascistas*, 1936, photograph. Courtesy of Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, Madrid.

Even more indicative of the editorial decision to visualise militant women as revolutionary symbols is another shot taken by Campaña. Located in the archives of the anarchist Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo in Madrid, Figure 2.16 shows a different perspective on the shot seen in Figure 2.13. In this shot, the unknown woman is photographed on the right of the image, unsmiling as her eyes gaze upwards, while beneath her, two men pose with rifles. In this frame, her posing remains dynamic but she is part of the action of combat, unlike the other shot. As the shot was likely staged, with Figure 2.13 and 2.16 depicting different poses, it is notable that the photograph with the more passive staging was chosen to be widely distributed; a choice that emphasises the complexity of how women's militancy was visualised in photography and the need to examine it with nuance. This collection of images also demonstrates the importance of understanding archival practice and its impact on photographs. As this discussion shows, historical photographs are often placed within classification schemes that abstract them, removing them from the process and context of

their production.<sup>290</sup> Located in three different archives, these images are rarely placed together, yet it is only in understanding the material construction and circulation of these photographs as part of a collective practice and pattern of use that we can understand the conditions placed on women's visibility and the role of photography in shaping how women were seen in narratives of war. Furthermore, like the reproductions of Figure 2.12, none of the archival catalogues mention the women's name. This anonymity further reinforces that she is seen as a symbolic figure of revolution, rather than a historical actor in her own right, a visual dynamic that redefines women within patriarchal frameworks of war.

## 2.5 The Militarised Cover Girl: Constructing and Glamourising Militant Femininity in Crónica



**Figure 2.17**, Foto Vidal, *Crónica*, 'The defence of Valencia against the rebel's coup', 2 August 1936. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

The revolutionary aesthetic produced within photographs of militiawomen still conformed to the essentialist way of seeing women as objects who were designed to be viewed

<sup>290</sup> For a further discussion on the archive and photography see: Rose, 'Practising Photography'.

by the presumed male spectator.<sup>291</sup> It is not enough to hold a gun, the photographic militiawomen must look attractive while doing so, and crucially she must not appear threatening to the viewer.<sup>292</sup> For example, Figure 2.17 shows a collage of photographs highlighting women's mobilisation in the rearguard in Valencia. These photographs were shot by the photojournalist Luis Vidal Corella, who was a frequent contributor to the photo-magazine *Crónica*.<sup>293</sup> The photographs, shot in August 1936, highlight a diverse range of women militants, yet only one photograph in this feature was widely re-published during the war. The third photograph in the feature shows a band of women and men, all of whom are again anonymous, marching down a street in Valencia, with Vidal Corella's camera focusing on a young woman in a shirt and trousers. While the women around were caught unprepared by the camera, she smiled at it, creating an alluring gaze that draws the viewer in.

In subsequent, uncredited, uses of this photograph, such as the cover of the 13<sup>th</sup> August issue of the French magazine *Regards* (Figure 2.18), the image has been cropped to make this anonymous militiawoman the focus of the image, transforming the photograph from a display of collective solidarity from the people of Valencia to the actions of an individual. The image has been lightened to show the woman's face and gun more clearly, emphasising her beauty and youth as well as her subversion of gendered roles. One of the other women remained in the frame of the cropped image, her body out of focus when compared to the main militiawoman. Photographs of militiawomen not only had to embody the spirit of patriotism and revolutionary femininity, they also had to be a site of desire that appealed to the male gaze.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Berger, p. 64.

<sup>292</sup> Lisa Lines produced a comprehensive semiotic analysis of illustrated and photographic images of militiawomen in the Spanish press from 1936 to 1937. Her analysis demonstrates that while images of militiawomen were often framed passively in both political and commercial press, the political press depicted these women within a framework of patriotism, whereas the commercial press focused on the beauty and femininity of militiawomen. Lines, *Milicianas*, pp. 151-72.

<sup>293</sup> Beatriz de las Heras Herrero, 'La Guerra Civil Española en *Crónica* (1929-1938) durante el Primer Año de Contienda. Poética Fotográfica como Información y Estrategia', *Revista General de Información y Documentación*, 30.2 (2020), 609-629, p. 621.

<sup>294</sup> Laura Mulvey's concept of the 'male gaze' argues that the controlling gaze in film is coded as masculine, with spectators encouraged to identify with the looking of the male hero and make the female lead a passive object. This theory has been developed on throughout studies of visual culture, including within photography where theorists such as John Berger have argued that the ideal spectator is assumed to be male, and women's photographic bodies are composed to be pleasurable and flattering to him. Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16.3 (1975), 6-18; Berger, p. 64. For recent work on the male gaze and photography see also: Annette Pritchard and Nigel J. Morgan, 'Privileging the Male Gaze: Gendered Tourism Landscapes', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27.4 (2000), 884-905; Morna Laing and Jacki Wilson (eds), *Revisiting the Gaze: The Fashioned Body and the Politics of Looking* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Andrew van der Vlies, 'Queer Knowledge and the Politics of the Gaze in Contemporary South African photography: Zanele Muholi and Others', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 24.2 (2012), 140-56.

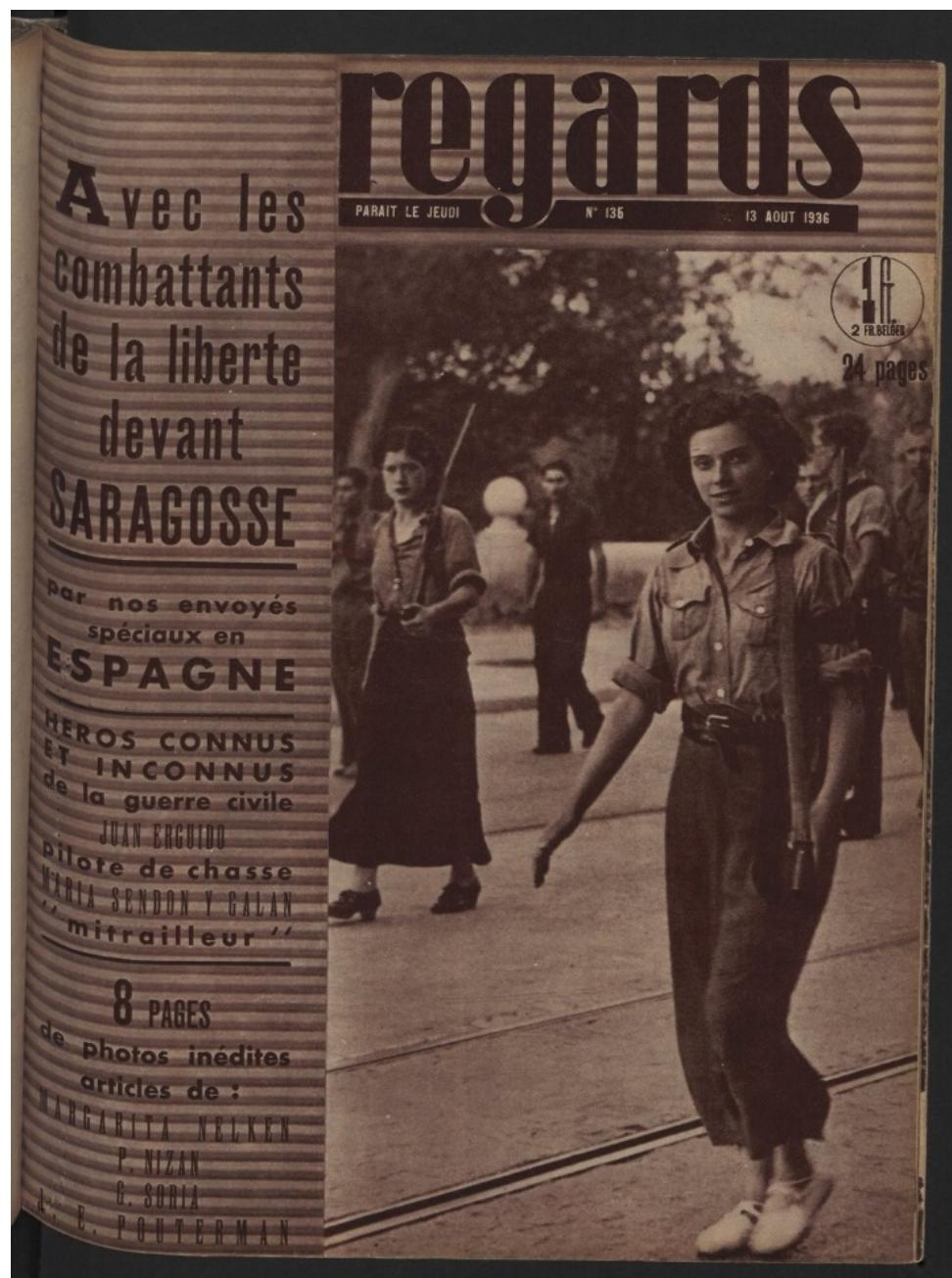


Figure 2.18, Foto Vidal, 'With the freedom fighters on the Zaragoza front', *Regards*, 13 August 1936. Courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Within the Republican press, photographs of militiawomen were characterised by themes of patriotic duty, bravery and sacrifice—themes that, as Cynthia Enloe argues, permit the mobilization of women without heavily disrupting patriarchal ideology, as well as facilitating the later demobilization of women.<sup>295</sup> Indeed, Mary Nash argues that while these images represented a challenge to traditional gendered roles, they were used to 'convey a

<sup>295</sup> Cynthia Enloe, 'Women- The Reverse Army of Army Labour', *Review of Radical Political Economies*, 12.2 (1980), 42-52, p. 46.

message that did not deeply alter more conventional views of women'.<sup>296</sup> The independent press added another dimension to these images, as they framed women's militancy within an established framework of male fantasy that centred the male gaze within their depictions. These photographs constituted a narrative that sought to maintain boundaries between masculinity and femininity on the front by foregrounding the femininity and desirability of the militiawomen, a narrative that would ultimately be used to justify their withdrawal from the front. These photographs have frequently been reproduced out of context as images of women's empowerment, and yet upon examining the circumstances of their production, it is clear that these images were produced in an environment that fetishised militant women. Cropping and pasting these photographs into new contexts does not erase the patriarchal values that governed how these women were seen; rather it replicates and re-circulates these power dynamics, reinforcing a reductive mythology of aestheticized rebellion that minimises the complex ways that Spanish militiawomen were photographed during war.<sup>297</sup>

In tracing the changing narrative surrounding militiawomen, I have focused on a single magazine to more thoroughly understand the role of photography in shaping how women were seen during the civil war. I examined *Crónica: Revista de la Semana* (1929-38), a photographic periodical edited by Antonio González Linares, as it was one of the most popular commercial newspapers in the Second Republic, with a peak of 200,000 copies and continuously high levels of circulation throughout the war.<sup>298</sup> It was a progressive but non-politically affiliated paper of the independent Republican press, and featured one of the highest circulations of photographs and articles on militiawomen.<sup>299</sup> When analysing the construction of wartime femininity in the press, it is crucial to focus on the totality of the magazine—that is to say, examining not only articles directly focusing on the experiences of war but also advertisements, photographs and other reports.<sup>300</sup> While in the Irish case study, I addressed the counter-narrative produced within women's amateur photography, this section focuses solely on commercial and press photography. Unlike in Ireland, working-class Spanish women, who made up the majority of militiawomen, had less access to studio photographers and they relied instead on travelling photographers who primarily operated on feast days, a

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<sup>296</sup> Nash, p. 48.

<sup>297</sup> Hayes, p. 522. See also Alison Moore for a discussion of the politics of photographic reproduction and mythologisation in relation to the *femmes tondues*. Alison M. Moore, 'History, Memory and Trauma in the Photography of the *Tondues*: Visuality of the Vichy Past through the Silent Image of Women', *Gender and History*, 17.3 (2005), 657-81, pp. 658-9.

<sup>298</sup> Juan Miguel Sánchez Vigil, *Revistas Ilustradas en España* (Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2008), pp. 182-3.

<sup>299</sup> Lines, *Milicianas*, p. 54.

<sup>300</sup> Marilyn Hegarty, 'Patriot or Prostitute? Sexual Discourses, Print Media and American Women during World War II', *Journal of Women's History*, 10.2 (1998), 112-36, p. 114.

practice disturbed by the outbreak of civil war.<sup>301</sup> As the Nationalist armies advanced further into Republican-held territories, both professional photographers, activists, and civilians destroyed photographs to hide evidence of their involvement with the Republican cause.<sup>302</sup> As such, it is more difficult to locate private photographs made by Spanish militant women and examine how they constructed their revolutionary identity during war.

In addition to the reports that focused on presenting militiawomen as patriotic fantasies, *Crónica* printed advertisements for cosmetics and beauty supplements that directed women to control their appearance to appeal to men. At the same time, the women's section of the magazine enforced a more patriarchal perspective on gendered roles, with articles focusing on domestic life and the centrality of women to the home. The language of *Crónica* also reinforced the non-threatening nature of women's incursions onto the front, as it described the militiawomen as 'girls', language that served to both disarm and disempower them even as they challenged patriarchal control over their lives.<sup>303</sup> Examining the other photographs published in *Crónica* highlights how the male gaze was embedded into the magazine, as photographs of beautiful celebrities were published alongside artistically erotic photography from Studio Manassé and Federico Riba. Indeed, the issue published on the day of the coup d'état featured a publicity still of actress Ginger Rogers imitating a navy officer, a display of glamourous, sexualised femininity that served as an unintentional prelude to the later cover photographs of women enlisting to participate in war.<sup>304</sup> These established ways of seeing women transferred across to photographs of militiawomen, affirming their sexualised femininity in an effort to frame their presence on the front as non-threatening to the masculinity of combat.

The first photograph of a militiawoman published on the cover of *Crónica* affirms this reading. Figure 2.19, shot by Vicente López Vide, depicts a young girl in *mono* and a hat standing alone in front of a recruitment centre. She is grinning happily at the camera, her head tilted almost coquettishly, as she clutches the strap of her rifle. Despite the presence of the rifle and the militaristic uniform, she does not appear threatening or masculinised, one of the primary sites of anxiety surrounding women's presence at the front.

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<sup>301</sup> Moreno Andres, p. 101.

<sup>302</sup> Arroyo, pp. 463-472.

<sup>303</sup> Jessica Ghilani discusses the importance of analysing diminutive language in understanding how women's militarism is framed, see: Jessica Ghilani, 'Glamour-izing Military Service: Army Recruitment for Women in Vietnam-era Advertisements', *American Journalism*, 34.2 (2017), 201-28, p. 220.

<sup>304</sup> Foto R.K.O, 'La bellísima Estrella cinematográfica Ginger Rogers en su Nuevo papel de "oficiala" de marina' published in *Crónica*, 19 July 1936.

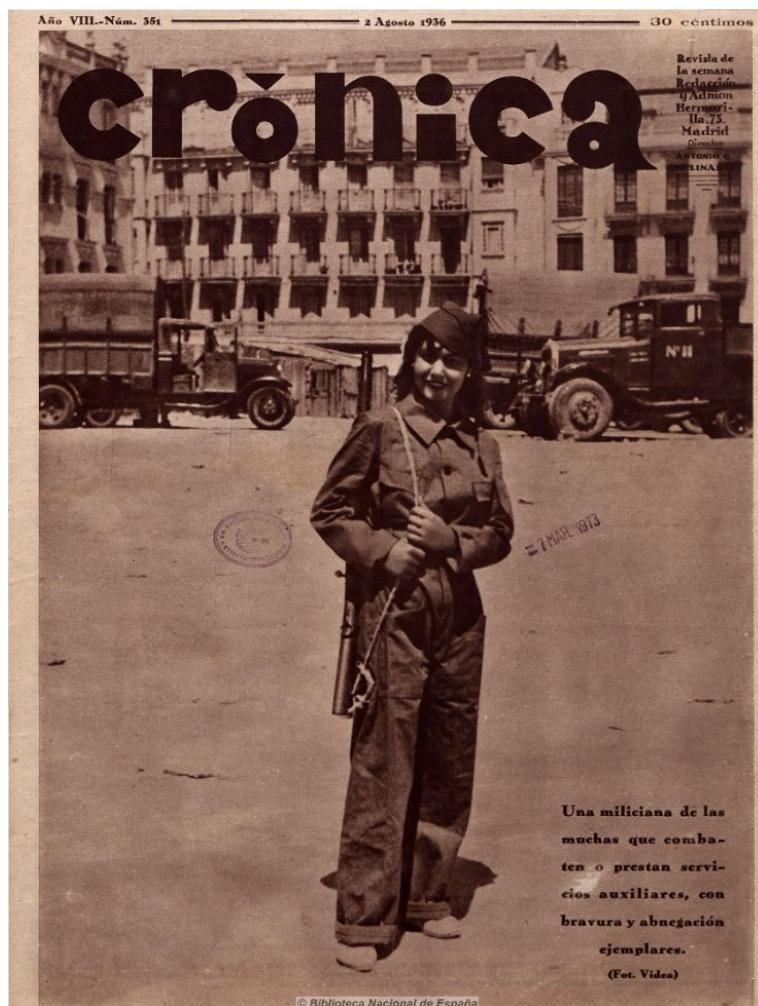


Figure 2.19, Foto Vídeo, *Crónica*, 2 August 1936. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Indeed, with her positioning in the centre of the frame, she is presented as isolated and vulnerable—out of sync with the military trucks and enlistment building behind her. Despite the militaristic tone of the photograph, the aesthetic signifiers of her transgression of normative gender roles in fact only affirm her femininity more, presenting her as an object of fantasy and desire—her uniform is cinched in the middle to define her figure, she is wearing lipstick and her hair is styled under her cap.<sup>305</sup> The emphasis on conformity with feminine beauty standards is particularly interesting as contemporary accounts from militiawomen discussed how they eschewed cosmetics in order to appear more serious, a dynamic that reflects the complexities in how women are seen during war.<sup>306</sup> There is an ambivalence to

<sup>305</sup> This was in line with previous articles in *Crónica* that had fetishised gender transgression, see Nuria Cruz-Cámara, 'Cross-dressing and Sex Change Stories in Spanish Illustrated Magazines (1928-1936)', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 25.2 (2019), 295-320.

<sup>306</sup> The journalist H.E Kaminski describes how women 'wear pants just like the men. It is useless to mention that here vanity serves no purpose and the women do not use lipstick and powder. The majority wear short hair like the men, to the point that often it is difficult to distinguish them'. Quoted from Mangini, p. 81.

how she is seen by the photographer, with the camera both celebrating her presence and yet also undermining her power and authority.

She is the only person in shot, but behind her are two military trucks that would transport her and her comrades to the front. Printed onto the bottom right of the image is the caption which describes her as 'one of the many militiawomen who are fighting or providing auxiliary services with exemplary bravery and selflessness'. The caption further affirms the femininity of the militiawoman by ascribing her actions within traditional virtues of femininity, while also distancing her from the violence of the front: she may be fighting or she could be providing auxiliary services, a role that conforms more to the expectations of women's role in war. Like many photographs of militiawomen within *Crónica*, this woman is anonymous and her image was in the control of the photographer, who composed the image to conform to the fantasy of the militant woman rather than the reality. The woman on the cover is a mute image onto which the spectator projected their own desires and fantasies.

The feminine glamour implicit in the cover image is carried over into the magazine itself, which contains articles on women enlisting to fight on the front alongside erotic photographs of women's bodies and advertisements for cosmetics that promise 'eternal seduction'. Unlike Ireland, there is little evidence of women commissioning their own photographs or constructing their own revolutionary identity, which makes the reproduction of these images as examples of female empowerment and agency contradictory. Within *Crónica*, there is only one example of an attempt by a militiawoman to assert control over her appearance. The incident is described in an article on women's recruitment into militias written by Rafael Martínez Gandía and photographed by López Vide, which focused on the motivations of women enlisting to fight on the front. All of the women featured were motivated by personal rather than political reasons, with the desire to re-join their partners or family at the front most prominent. The article centred their participation not as a revolutionary break with gendered roles, but as a temporary, wartime aberration to the patriarchal norm. The femininity of the militiawomen was further reinforced in an interview with a nurse who was training for combat. The woman, who quit her job as a typist on the first day of war, asked López Vide for a photograph to 'show off' her new uniform. As he readied his camera, she took out a tube of lipstick and a pocket mirror to prepare for the photograph, imitating the glamour that characterised photographs of women in *Crónica*.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Historically, cosmetics have been used as a way to visually show the femininity of women in military organisations, and challenge the idea of the 'masculinised' female recruit. Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War*,

Martinez Gandía ironically described this militiawoman ‘not having lost the essential virtues of womanhood’, demonstrating the ease by which militiawomen were dismissed as frivolous girls seeking romance and adventure.<sup>308</sup> The article framed this attempt by this unknown militiawoman to assert agency over how she would be seen as vanity, however, I view it as an example of what James C. Scott has described as ‘hidden transcripts’ of resistance.<sup>309</sup>

While Figure 2.19 quelled anxiety surrounding supposedly unfeminine women by affirming the femininity of the militiawomen, it reinforced another site of cultural anxiety: controlling women’s sexuality at the front.<sup>310</sup> The glamourous and sexualised image of militiawomen in the press generated doubt about women’s intentions in going to the front. With a few notable exceptions, such as the martyred Lina Odena mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, women’s presence at the front was presented as motivated by a romanticised image of war, with women seen as chasing adventure.<sup>311</sup> Additionally, militiawomen were accused of prostitution and connected to the outbreak of sexually transmitted diseases, a perspective that was furthered by propaganda in the Nationalist press.<sup>312</sup> Nationalist newspapers also used the presence of women in the militias as a way to denigrate Republican masculinity, an attack that threatened the legitimacy of the Republican military and government.<sup>313</sup> As a result, the Socialist Prime Minister of the Second Republic, Francisco Largo Caballero, ordered women to withdraw from the front and take up positions in the rearguard, working in factories and agriculture, which coincided with a push by the PCE to integrate the militias into a professional army. The political press quickly denied any relation between the militiawomen in the pages of the press and the women in their own organisations. For example, the Catalan anarchist periodical *Diari Oficial del Comité Antifeixista I de Salut Pública de Barcelona* published a critique of women’s involvement in the militias that directly condemned the photographic practice of the illustrated press: ‘More seriousness is

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*Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), pp. 6-55.

<sup>308</sup> Cristina Ruiz Serrano problematises how accusations of women romanticising war and participating for frivolous reasons has obscured the transgressive nature of women’s militant action during war. Cristina Ruiz Serrano, ‘Ni Cautivas Ni Desarmadas: la Imagen de la Miliciana en la Narrativa Contemporánea Española’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 98.6 (2021), 1-26, p. 6. See also: Linhard, p. 54.

<sup>309</sup> James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>310</sup> This is not a process singular to Spain, as Hegarty discusses this in relation to American women in World War Two; Hegarty, pp. 117-8. For an in-depth discussion of sexuality and militarism see: Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 49-107.

<sup>311</sup> Ruiz Serrano, p. 6; Mary Nash, ‘Women in War’, pp. 274-5.

<sup>312</sup> Linhard, pp. 54-7.

<sup>313</sup> Conversely, the presence of women at the front was seen as fortifying Republican manhood in sympathetic press, which was also used as a reason for why women needed to withdraw from the front, with men reacting like *caballeros* (gentlemen) and placing themselves in danger to rescue women in battle, causing more deaths and injuries. Mangini, p. 81.

needed. And an end to those magazines which publish photos of women armed with a gun who have never fired a shot in their lives'.<sup>314</sup>

While Spanish militant women were more prominent within the initial visual narratives of war than in Ireland, the ways in which they were seen were complex and a site of tension within the Republican war effort. Photographs of militiawomen disturbed the gendered ideology of war, as the visual evidence of women in combat threatened the masculinity of the movement, and therefore the legitimacy of the Second Republic.<sup>315</sup> In order to reclaim the legitimacy of the Republican movement, a new visual strategy emerged in conjunction with political orders to formalise the militias into a regular army and withdraw women from the front. This visual strategy used photographs to redefine women's roles to adhere to acceptable manifestations of wartime femininity, which sustained the masculinity of soldiering and combat. In doing so, it aimed to appease the cultural unease and anxieties that surrounded women's militancy.

## 2.6 Gendered Politics of Respectability: Press Photography and Ideologies of Domesticity at the Front

The 27<sup>th</sup> September 1936 issue of *Crónica* marked a turning point in how Spanish wartime femininity was constructed in photography. Spanish Communist propaganda and political discourse during the war had predominantly visualised women as part of the rearguard, rather than as participants on the front.<sup>316</sup> With growing Communist control over the government, military, and propaganda department, women's presence at the front was reimagined within the bounds of acceptable wartime femininity.<sup>317</sup> Simultaneously, the press began to feature more articles on women's rearguard activism, a shift in how women's participation had been represented in newspapers. In contrast to the earlier issues of *Crónica*, in which glamourous photographs of militiawomen had been a staple, the 27<sup>th</sup> September issue published a photograph of an anonymous Red Cross nurse. This cover of *Crónica*

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<sup>314</sup> Nash, 'Defying Male Civilization', p. 52.

<sup>315</sup> Sharon Crozier-De Rosa discusses how women's violence threatens the legitimacy of men's political violence and conduct in conflict in Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'The Shame of the Violent Woman' in *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 193-230.

<sup>316</sup> Lines, pp. 154-6.

<sup>317</sup> The PCE dominated the War Commissariat established in October 1936 to exercise control over the militias. Michael Seidmen, *Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p. 56. The financial and military support provided to the Republic by the USSR also saw the PCE take greater control over the Popular Front government, which led to increasing factionalism and conflict within the Republican political alliance, epitomised by the conflict between the anarchist CNT and POUM against the PSUC, Esquerra Catalana and the Republican government during the Barcelona May Days in 1937. For more, see: Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War*, pp. 254-315.

declared a change in the visual dynamics of women's participation in war, where their photographic visibility relied on their adherence to increasingly more traditional modes of feminine presentation. The other photographs in the issue followed through on this relocation of gendered norms, with a multi-page feature focusing on women working in the rearguard sewing clothes and uniforms for soldiers. This re-establishment of gendered narratives and demobilisation is more commonly associated with the development of the post-war state. Paralleling photographic press coverage of Irish militant women, however, this analysis of the changing representational dynamics of *Crónica* demonstrates that this process was active during the war itself, reinforcing the complexity and contradictory nature of photographic representation of women on the Spanish front.<sup>318</sup>

These photographs established a narrative of gendered respectability and legitimacy that sought to assert control over the meanings of wartime femininity and masculinity to reinforce patriarchal dynamics at the front. These images achieved this reconstruction of meaning through imparting an ideology of domestic sentiment, a photographic tool that has been weaponised to civilise and naturalise war.<sup>319</sup> Domestic photography, taken broadly as photographs that emulate the social relations of patriarchal power, seeks to make the visible disappear.<sup>320</sup> Just as Irish press photography used the framing of domestic motherhood to erase traces of Constance Markievicz's radical militancy, *Crónica* photographers used the domestic ideals embodied within the symbolic figures of the nurse and the wife to impart a sense of patriarchal order to the front to eliminate the gendered transgression of the militiawomen.

In twentieth-century Europe, nursing was well-established as a means for women to engage in warfare without violating the masculinity of combat or the conventional notions of respectable femininity.<sup>321</sup> The wartime nurse was considered a paragon of feminine propriety

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<sup>318</sup> For more on the demobilisation and re-feminization of women, see Enloe, *Maneuvers*, p. 218.

<sup>319</sup> Wexler, *Tender Violence*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>320</sup> Wexler, *Tender Violence*, p. 35.

<sup>321</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*, p. 214. However, while the image of the wartime nurse aligned more with normative understandings of gendered roles in warfare, she still occupied an ambivalent position in the public imagination. As historians such as Katie Holmes and Sandra Gilbert have argued, the war nurse was seen to hold a position of dangerous power over the male soldiers they nursed, a monstrous embodiment of the threat of 'victorious femininity' looming over the embattled soldier. Even when away from frontline combat, the participation of women in war still threatened patriarchal belief systems of masculine war, and as Lucy Noakes has argued within the context of women's participation in the first world war, they were subject to similar accusations of gendered impropriety as women participated in militarised, militant, or paramilitary activities, see: Lucy Noakes, '“A disgrace to the country they belong to”: the sexualisation of female soldiers in First World War Britain', *Revue LIS4*, 6:4 (2008), 11-26, p. 17. Katie Holmes, 'Day Mothers and Night Sisters: World War I Nurses and Sexuality' in *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 43-59; Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Soldier's Heart: Literary Men,

constructed from the biologically essentialist ideals of true womanhood: she was sweet, caring and a comfort to the injured male soldiers, whilst also fulfilling her duties with a professional competency.<sup>322</sup> During the Spanish Civil War, the nurse and the militiawomen were initially presented as complementary expressions of women's patriotism, as seen in Figure 2.20, with a degree of fluidity between the two positions. Published as an illustration in *Crónica*, Figure 2.20 depicted two women holding hands as they marched forward into the future, breaking the chains of tradition that restrained them.



**Figure 2.20**, Holine, 'Las Heroinas', *Crónica*, 23 August 1936, p. 23. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Literary Women, and the Great War' in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. by Margaret Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins-Weitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 197-226.  
<sup>322</sup> Cynthia Enloe, 'Wounds: Militarized Nursing, Feminist Curiosity and Unending War'. *International Relations*, 33.3 (2019), 393-412, pp. 396-7.

Titled 'The Heroines', the nurse in her white uniform and the militiawomen in her *mono* were both represented as revolutionary breaks from tradition, with the militiawomen advocating for women's presence at the front and the nurse representing the rise of politically active, secular nursing that replaced the dominance of religiously-affiliated nurses.<sup>323</sup>

However, as the war wore on, the figure of the nurse was used to re-situate women within narratives of traditional femininity. Indeed, as Mary McAuliffe has argued, a similar strategy had been developed in Ireland where the Irish Free State government and press emphasised the nursing and first aid duties performed by militant women during the revolution as a way to reinforce their femininity and diminish their political activism and militancy.<sup>324</sup> During the Spanish Civil War, the nurse was expected to embody essentialist notions of gender, with the Regulations of the Nursing Corps of the Spanish Red Cross demanding that its nurses imbue 'sweetness and patience' into their conduct and manner.<sup>325</sup> Nursing constructed a mode of patriotic femininity that did not threaten the patriarchal ideals of combat, and after August 1936, the figure of the nurse eclipsed the glamourous militiawomen as the dominant way of visualising women's presence at the front.<sup>326</sup> The nurse restored a sense of domestic order to the front, an ideology of domesticity that had been threatened by the transgressive presence of the militiawomen.<sup>327</sup>

Photographers have presented militarised nurses within the framework of romanticised fantasy, both the object of the male gaze and fantasy and yet simultaneously 'angelically asexual' in order to maintain them as figures of respectable femininity.<sup>328</sup> Pablo Luis Torrents'

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<sup>323</sup> For more on nursing as a political profession during the Second Republic and the Spanish Civil War see: Dolores Martín Moruno, 'Becoming Visible and Real: Images of Republican women during the Spanish Civil War', *Visual Culture and Gender*, 5 (2010), 5-15.

<sup>324</sup> McAuliffe particularly describes this process in relation to Elizabeth O'Farrell, who is the subject of Chapter 4 of this thesis. McAuliffe, 'Remembered for Being Forgotten', p. 33.

<sup>325</sup> Reglamento del Cuerpo de damas enfermeras de la Cruz Roja española/Regulations of the Nursing Corps of the Spanish Red Cross (1928), cited in Martin-Mourno and Ordóñez Rodríguez, p. 313.

<sup>326</sup> In illustrated magazines produced during the First World War, women were predominantly pictured as nurses, whilst Alison Fell notes that French and British governments explicitly commissioned film and photography of nurses to reinforce how women retained the 'essential' qualities of femininity during war. Jonathan Rayner, 'The Carer, the Combatant and the Clandestine: Images of women in the First World War in *War Illustrated* magazine', *Women's History Review*, 27.4 (2018), 516-33; Alison Fell, 'Female War Icons: Visual Representations of Women's Contribution to the First World War in France and Britain in 1914-1918 and 2014-2018', *European Journal of Feminist History*, 29.2 (2018), 35-49, p. 40.

<sup>327</sup> For more on the interplay between nursing and domesticity, see: Kara Dixon Vuic, *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 37-42; Melissa T. Brown, "'A Woman in the Army is Still a Woman": Representations of Women in US Military Recruiting Advertisements for the All-Volunteer Force', *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, 33.2 (2012), 151-75.

<sup>328</sup> Enloe, *Manoeuvres*, p. 219.

photograph of an anonymous, Red Cross nurse, which was published on the cover of *Crónica* on the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1936, exemplified these dynamics.



**Figure 2.21**, Pablo Luis Torrents, 'Una heroína', *Crónica*, 27 September 1936.  
Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid..

This photograph is invested with the ideologies of domesticity that constructed what it meant to be a 'proper' woman, and how femininity and war should interact. It depicted a smiling nurse in a clean, white uniform dress with a red cross pinned to the front of it standing before a graffitied wall. Her face is bright as she smiles at the camera, wearing lipstick and a protective metal helmet that is the only indication of her operating in a warzone. Her femininity is untouched by war, and the smile on her face reminds us of the role of the nurse in not only providing medical care but also bolstering morale. There are no visual signifiers of the violence of war in the photograph; a compositional choice that divorces this woman from the masculine space of the battlefield.<sup>329</sup> Indeed, the only masculine presence in the

<sup>329</sup> As Cynthia Enloe reminds us, the conceptualisation of the front as a masculine space requires the illusion that women are separate from combat and the violence of war. 'Women as *women* must be denied access to "the front", to "combat", so that men can justify their dominant position in the social order. And yet because women

photograph is the male bomber jacket draped over her shoulders, which only reinforces the femininity of the nurse and her presence as a romanticised figure in the war narrative. To both readers and passers-by, who merely saw the cover of the magazine on newsstands, they could be reassured that the femininity of women at the front was maintained, that they continued to behave and *look* how a woman should look. The caption below the image reinforced the nurse as a model of respectable femininity:

This nurse, who didn't authorise us to publish her name, is admired by all combatants in her sector for the heroism she shows caring for the injured in the line of fire, with no concern for bullets or shrapnel.<sup>330</sup>

In emphasising the modesty and beauty of the nurse, this photograph transformed her into an embodiment of idealised womanhood, providing an alternative to the anxiety-provoking militiawomen.

Photographs of nurses during the Spanish Civil War constructed and transmitted a respectable femininity that supported and reinforced the virile, military masculinity of Republican soldiers. The symbolic figure of the militarised nurse stabilised the association of masculinity with combat and action, and femininity with nurturing and care. Yet, this idealised conceptualisation undermined the complex position of the nurse within war. For many women, nursing was an opportunity for political activism and to create a new identity away from the constraint of the home.<sup>331</sup> Like the first aid provided by Irish militant women to guerrilla fighters during the Civil War, nursing on the front was a key aspect of women's militancy, and the subsumption of their experiences into the idealised archetype of the passive, feminised nurse is another example of how women's experiences of war are silenced.<sup>332</sup> Though photographs of nurses had always been present within the visual landscape of the Spanish Civil War, they were increasingly produced and distributed as a way to allay cultural unease and anxiety around the subversive figure of the militiawomen. In addition to the nurse overtaking the militiawoman as the dominant way of visualising women's participation in war, press photography also re-defined militiawomen within traditional ideologies of gender to

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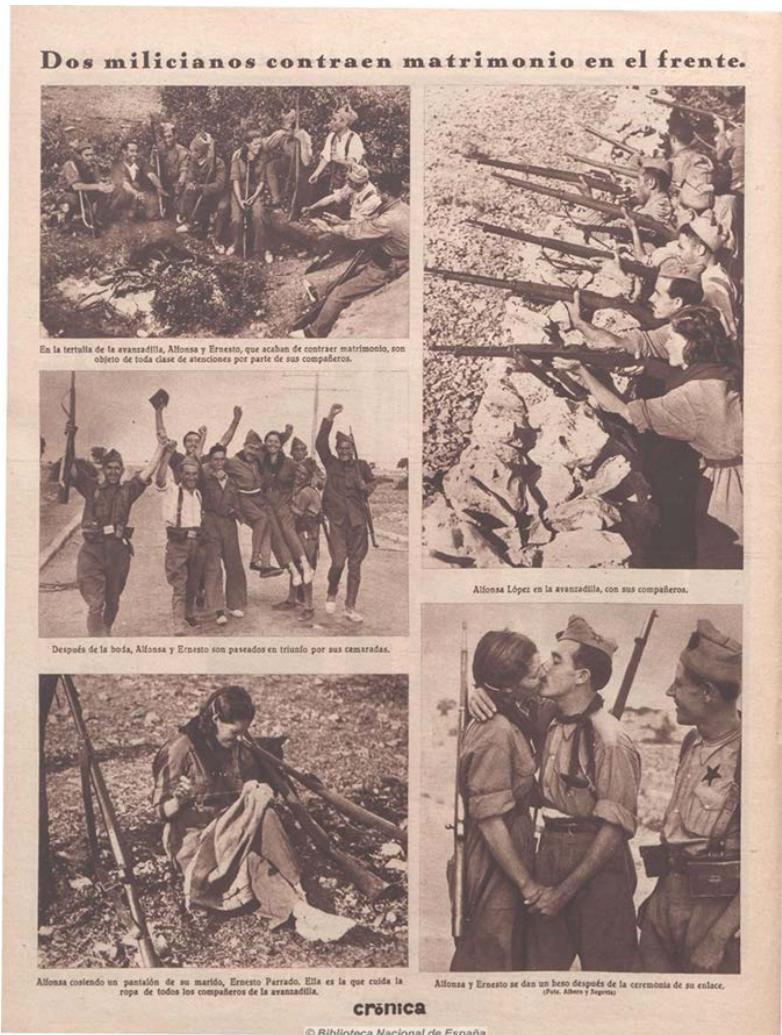
are in practice often exposed to frontline combat... the military has to constantly redefine "the front" and "combat" as wherever "women are not". Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You?* p. 15.

<sup>330</sup> *Crónica*, 27 September 1936, Madrid.

<sup>331</sup> Martín Moruno and Ordóñez Rodríguez, p. 306.

<sup>332</sup> Angela Jackson, 'Blood and Guts: Nursing with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39', in *One Hundred Years of Wartime Nursing Practices, 1854-1953*, ed. by Jane Brooks and Christine Hallett (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), pp. 165-188.

recuperate their reputations. Within the pages of *Crónica*, marriage was a key tool to position the militiawomen within domestic narratives of femininity.



**Figure 2.22**, Foto Albero y Segovia, 'Dos Milicianos Contraen Matrimonio En El Frente', *Crónica*, 27 September 1936. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid.

Félix Albero and Francisco Segovia shot the photographic featurette 'A Militiaman and Militiawoman Get Married at the Front' (Figure 2.22) under the Foto Albero y Segovia label. The pair were well-known for their candid photographs of daily life at the front, with many images focusing on women. This article differs from their earlier output as the pair used the presence of the titular militiawoman as a way to stabilise and reinforce patriarchal gender relations at the front. Just as the *Catholic Bulletin* used the domestic framing of motherhood to displace Constance Markievicz's militant identity, *Crónica* positioned the militiawoman in the role of wife in order to alleviate the cultural anxiety provoked by the earlier depictions of revolutionary militiawomen at the front. Whilst not literally depicting the domestic scene, I argue that the references to gendered labour, marriage and ideals of femininity and masculinity

marked these photographs as signifying the domestic realm, thus legitimising military action and warfare.<sup>333</sup>

The article, comprised of five photographs with captions, illustrated the celebration of marriage between Alfonsa López and Ernesto Parrado. One image depicted an intimate close-up of the pair kissing while another man looked on at them, while a second image showed the rest of the battalion lifting the couple up to the camera with joy, fists raised high in a salute and smiles on their faces. The remaining images depicted a tableaux of daily life and demonstrated a patriarchal continuity between the civilian home and the front, with photographs showing the squad gathered talking round a fire, posing with guns on a stone parapet and López mending clothes for her husband. Marriage at the front was not unusual—many formed romantic bonds at the front, and others still had enrolled in the militias to fight alongside their partners.<sup>334</sup> However, in this article, López and Parrado's marriage reinforces what Cynthia Enloe has insightfully argued about marriage and the military, namely that wifely femininity is only valued insofar as it enhances militarised masculinity.<sup>335</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter, the romanticised and fetishised depiction of militiawomen led to accusations that they were not legitimate combatants with patriotic motivations, but rather that they were prostitutes or simply using the front as a means to find adventure and a husband. Marriage offered a way to legitimise the presence of women at the front by taking control over women's sexuality.<sup>336</sup> The assumption that if a woman was married then she could not be a camp follower or sex worker made marriage a powerful tool for enforcing the respectability and legitimacy of the Second Republic. In locating Alfonsa López within the narrative of marriage, the article re-affirmed the femininity and heterosexuality of the militant woman, two aspects of Republican womanhood that had been targeted in the Francoist press.<sup>337</sup> Just like the romanticised nurse, the presence of the married woman on the frontlines enhanced the soldierly masculinity of the Republican militiamen and reinforced the legitimacy of the Second Republic.

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<sup>333</sup> In this reading, I take inspiration from Laura Wexler's analysis of domestic photographs of war and militarism, where she argues that 'domestic images may be—but need not be—representations of and for a so-called separate sphere of family life... what matters is the use of the image to signify the domestic realm. The domestic realm can be figured as well by a battleship as by a nursery'. Wexler, *Tender Violence*, p. 21.

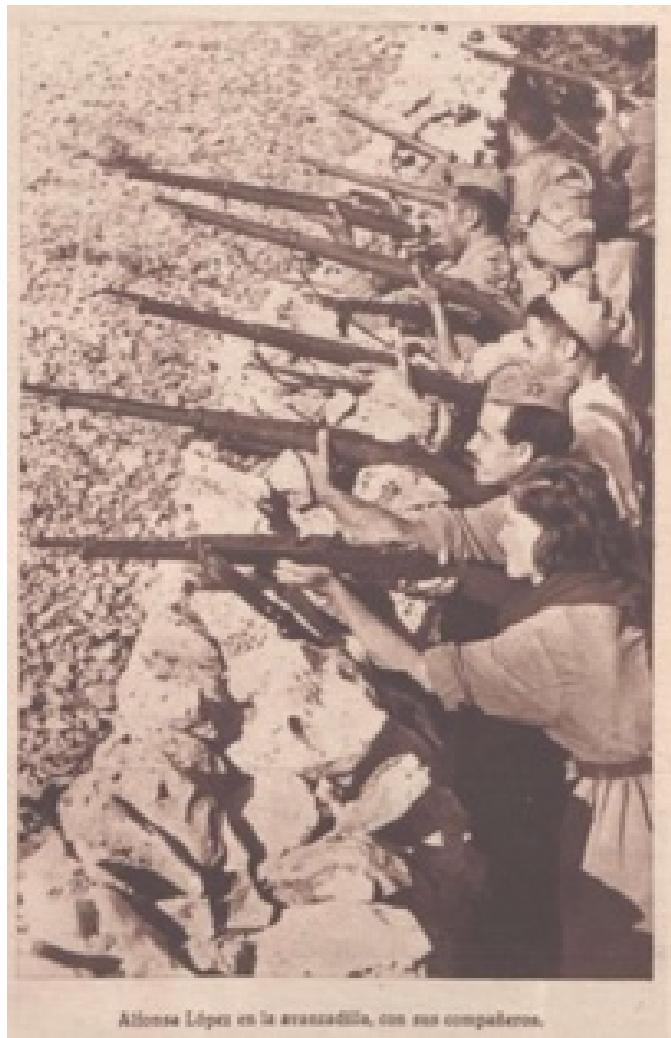
<sup>334</sup> Nash, pp. 106-7. During the post-war period, however, many of these civil marriages were dissolved and unrecognised as they had not been performed by a priest.

<sup>335</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*, p. 156.

<sup>336</sup> Susan Grayzel discusses this in the context of the First World War, where 'khaki marriages' were used to assert the femininity of the female soldier and dispel accusations of sexual impropriety. Susan Grayzel, "The Outward and Visible Sign of her Patriotism": Women, Uniforms and National Service, *Twentieth Century British History*, 8.2 (1997), 145-64, pp. 160-1. For marriage in the Spanish context see: Mercedes Carbayo-Abengózar, p. 84.

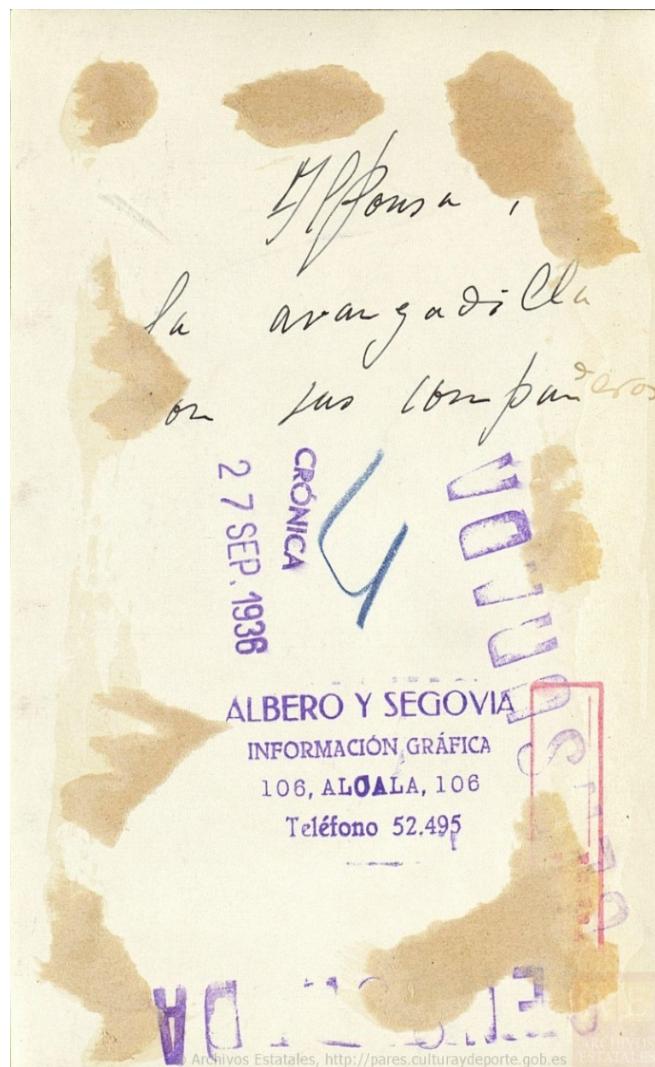
<sup>337</sup> Sofía Rodríguez López, 'Mujeres Perversas . La Caricaturización Femenina como Expresión de Poder entre la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo', *Asparkia*, 16 (2005), 177-98.

This collection of images reflected the ideological need to re-align the front with conventional domestic practises, with Alfonsa performing the roles of both the transgressive militiawoman and the traditional wife. This negotiation of gender at the front was complex—while Figure 2.23, which framed López as an active combatant, was outweighed by the images of López performing traditionally feminine roles, it was still initially censored by the Republican propaganda department.<sup>338</sup> Figure 2.24 shows the reverse of the original copy of Figure 2.23, stamped with ‘censurada’ (censored).



**Figure 2.23**, Foto Albero y Segovia, ‘Alfonsa López con sus compañeros’, *Crónica*, 27 September 1936. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid.

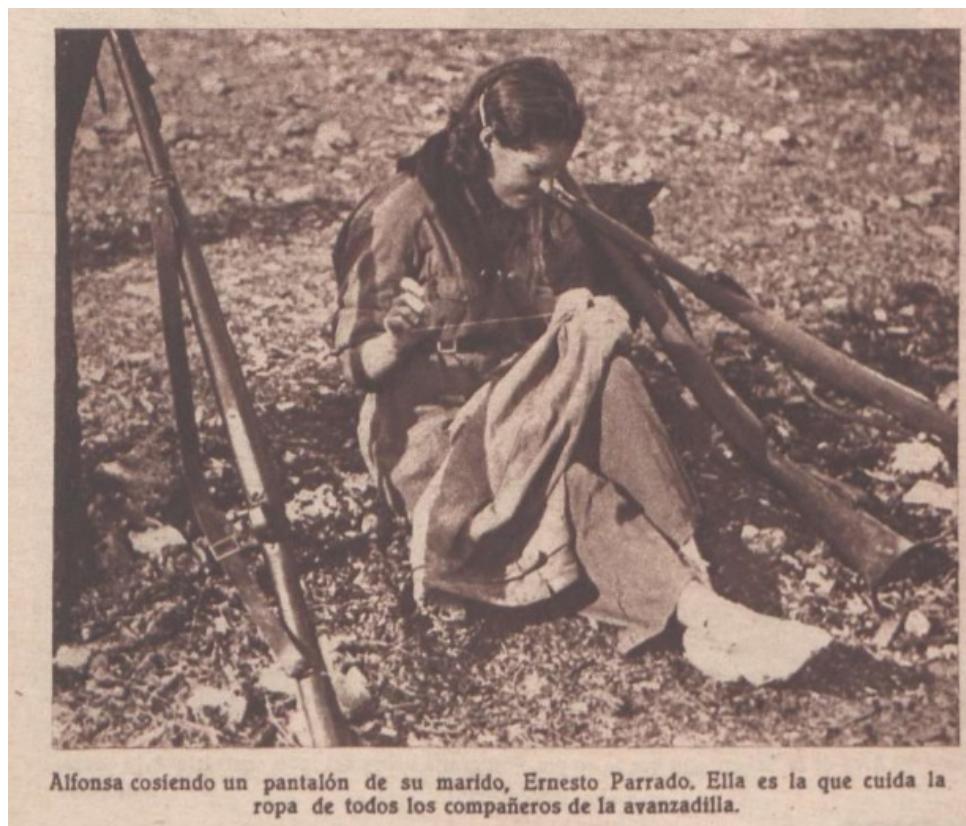
<sup>338</sup> The location of this photograph in the CDMH archive is another aspect of the complex negotiation of gendered roles and erasure of women’s militancy at the front. During the Francoist dictatorship, the CDMH documented the ‘barbarity’ of the Republican forces in order to justify Francoist violence and provided evidence for use in military tribunals. The photograph’s journey into the archive is a prime example of the need to understand not only the initial production and circulation of war photography, but also their afterlives.



**Figure 2.24**, Foto Albero y Segovia, Reverse of photograph of the militiawoman Alfonsa, photograph, 1936. Courtesy of Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca.

The initial censorship of this photograph and its subsequent publication as part of a series focusing on domesticity and marriage at the front provokes questions that, due to the destruction of the press and censorship records at the end of the war, cannot be fully resolved. It is possible that this photograph was only allowed to be published if included in a series that ultimately reinforced the masculinity of combat and re-affirmed patriarchal order at the front, in line with demands from the Republican government to withdraw women from the front and encourage them to take up roles in the rearguard.

The jarring position of Figure 2.23 within the feature is particularly evident when placed into comparison with Figure 2.25, which contains the most gender normative messaging. These two photographs signalled the complex negotiation of gendered roles and domesticity at the front. Marriage offered a means to redefine the militiawomen within normative gendered roles, as shown by the photograph of López engaging in domestic labour, yet the continuing references to the militiawoman as an active combatant complicated the adoption of militant women into the domestic narrative. Unlike Figure 2.21, traces of war were present throughout all the images in the article, represented by the landscape of the front, the men in her squadron, and the omnipresence of rifles in all the photographs—even within the domestic aesthetic of Figure 2.25, she remained surrounded by rifles. Reading the series as a whole, however, the inclusion of López within the combative landscape of the front justified her position as temporary, with the photograph of her mending clothes surrounded by guns highlighting how, even within the destabilising environment of war, women still performed traditional feminine duties.



**Figure 2.25**, Foto Albero y Segovia, 'Alfonsa cosiendo un pantalón de su marido', *Crónica*, 27 September 1936. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid.

The caption to this photograph bolstered this message further: it is not her own clothes that she is mending, but her husband's, and the caption further stated that 'she is the one who takes care of everyone's clothes in the company'. This reinforced the patriarchal domesticity of the front, where women could take part in masculine actions of combat, on a temporary

basis, but male soldiers could not be seen to perform the feminine tasks of domestic labour while a woman was present.<sup>339</sup> Her marriage legitimised her position at the front and reassured the reader that once the war is over, the so-called natural domestic order will return.

The photographs of Alfonsa López are one of the few examples of how the Republican press attempted to control and redefine women's militancy within narratives of normative femininity. Later articles focused on the participation of women in the rearguard and in more societally palatable roles such as the 'homefront heroine' and heroic mother.<sup>340</sup> As I have demonstrated throughout this section, the erasure of women's militancy within the press was a complex process, often contradictory in its approach. Images of militiawomen were published sporadically until March 1937, when the Republican government announced the final orders of withdrawal for militiawomen. Photography defined wartime femininity in accordance to the needs of the state, with women's militant participation legitimised only if their engagement fit into the war narrative—a clear counterpart to the shifting constructions of militant femininity during the Irish revolutionary period. It is essential, then, to engage with photographs as historical objects that can map the development of gendered national ideologies, rather than objective illustrations of participation or visual signifiers of empowerment. In the next section, I will follow through on this discussion on processes of erasure and redefinition of women's militancy by analysing the representation of women in the final years of the war, and the role these images played in humanitarian photography.

## 2.7 Mourning and Victimhood: Women in Commercial Photography in the Spanish Civil War

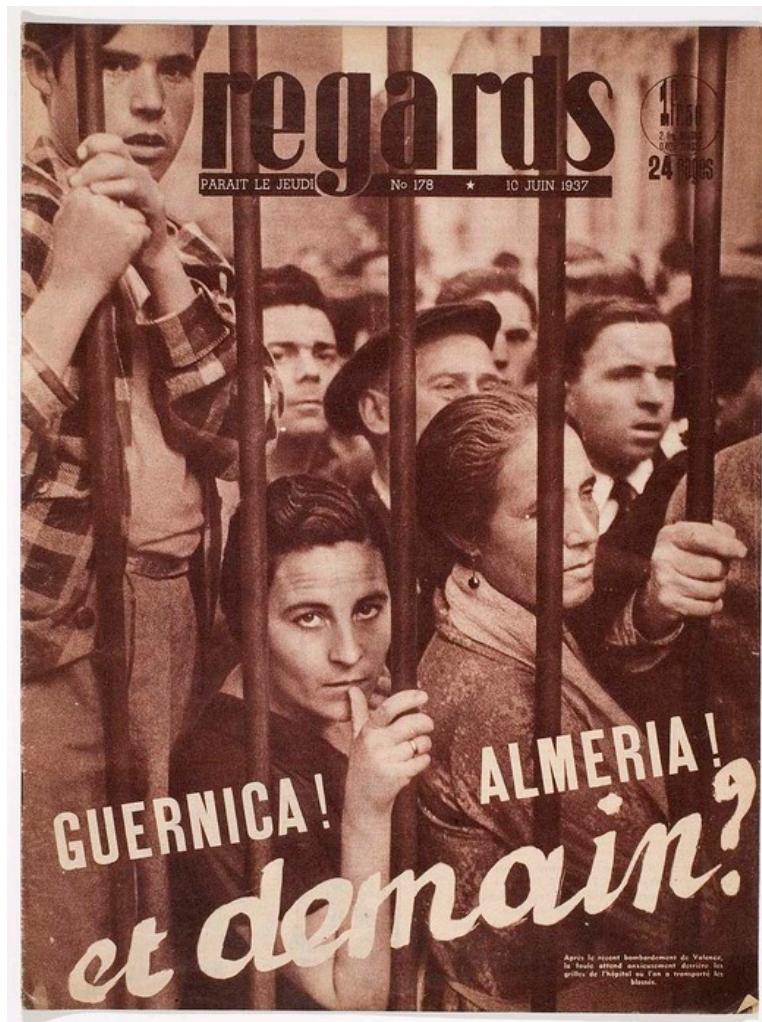
After women's forced withdrawal from the front in 1937, propagandists and photographers shifted their focus to solely representing women as victims of violence and as grieving mothers. As I discussed in relation to Irish militant women, mourning photography held the potential to both empower and disempower women, investing them with political agency or framing them as victims. During the Irish War of Independence, photographs of women's political mourning were used to subvert press censorship; during the Spanish Civil War, photojournalists intertwined these images within frameworks of emotive victimhood and

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<sup>339</sup> Joanna Bourke has argued that in the trenches of World War I, male soldiers did engage in the practices of patriarchal domesticity, however this was possible only through the absence of women. Bourke, pp. 157-8. Frances Lannon has also discussed how in the Spanish Civil War, women on the front were expected to do a double shift, 'one with a gun, the other with a broom'. Lannon, p. 222.

<sup>340</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, p. 117.

directed them towards an outside gaze.<sup>341</sup> Yet the photographic construction of these images was complex, with photographers and subjects retaining a sense of agency and anger that disturbed the archetype of the passive and powerless feminine victim of war.<sup>342</sup>



**Figure 2.26**, Gerda Taro, ‘Guernica! Almeria! Et Demain?’, *Regards*, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1937. Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Figure 2.26, a photograph of an anonymous woman in the wake of a bombing campaign in Valencia by the German photojournalist Gerda Taro, illuminated these complex dynamics of mourning, victimhood and protest. Published in the French communist magazine *Regards* in June 1937, Figure 2.26 captured the same defiant gaze present in Figure 2.8, of the Cumann na mBan mourning protest. Taro’s photograph depicted an older woman standing at the gates of

<sup>341</sup> For more on this see: Rodríguez López, ‘Corpus Delicti’, pp. 359-400; Dolores Martín Moruno, ‘Elisabeth Eidenbenz’s Humanitarian Experience during the Spanish Civil War and Republican Exile’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 21.4 (2021), 485-502.

<sup>342</sup> For a more in-depth examination of this in relation to photographs of women as refugees, see María Rosón Villena and Lee Douglas, ‘The Things They Carried: A Gendered Re-Reading of Photographs of Displacement during the Spanish Civil War’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 21.4 (2020), 459-83.

the morgue waiting to find out if her loved ones are counted among the dead, a photograph of pre-emptive grief. Crowded in-between the crush of demanding bodies, pressed up against the gate, her face, which is gaunt from the ravages of war, is turned towards Taro. This framing defied the standardised composition of mourning photography, which placed the grieving woman as an object to be looked upon rather than an active subject.<sup>343</sup> Taro's photograph emphasised the resigned anger evident in her face, and in doing so it transformed this image of mourning into a message of protest that demanded the international viewer to recognise the suffering of the Spanish people. Like Irish mourning photography, this image captured a sense of collective mourning and grief. While this woman is the focus of the photograph, she is not the only subject as the shot featured a crowd of people around her also in a state of grief. This photograph thus defied the trope of the singular mourning woman, which is traditionally used to confirm the passive positioning of women's place in war under the patriarchal order. Like Figure 2.8, women were positioned through a lens of moral authority that demanded action from the viewer.

This image also demonstrates the complex relationship between women photographers and war.<sup>344</sup> As a 'photogenic war' that reflected the wider ideological divides of early twentieth century Europe, the Spanish Civil War attracted a large number of foreign journalists and photographers. Gerda Taro, the photographer behind Figure 2.26, is perhaps the most famous representative of these female photographers and journalists within contemporary remembrance of the war. For many years, Taro, who died fleeing from the Battle of Brunete, was a neglected figure within the canon of Spanish photojournalism, overshadowed by her partner Robert Capa, but she was by no means the only woman who took on this role. Amongst well-established journalists such as the American Martha Gellhorn and the French Andree Viollis, female photographers such as Kati Horna, Vera Elkan, Margaret Michaelis, and Agnes Hodgson travelled to Spain to photograph the war.<sup>345</sup> While the value of the 'female angle on war' has often been attributed to the commercial shock value of women's presence and perspective within the masculine space of war, women's roles in reporting and

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<sup>343</sup> Mulvey, p. 62.

<sup>344</sup> For further expansion on this, please see the works of Laura Wrexler and Pippa Oldfield.

<sup>345</sup> Carmen Agustín-Lacruz and Luis Blanco-Domingo, 'La memoria en encuadres. Fotógrafas extranjeras en Aragón durante la Guerra Civil Española (1936-1939)', *Documentación de las Ciencias de la Información*, 44.1 (2021), 61-72. Further research on the presence of female journalists during the Spanish Civil War can be found in: David Deacon, "Going to Spain with the Boys": Women Correspondents and the Spanish Civil War, in *Narrating Media History*, ed. Michael Bailey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 68-78 and Isabelle Meuret, 'Rebels with a Cause: Women Reporting the Spanish Civil War', *Literary Journalism Studies*, 7.1 (2015), 76-98. An introduction to the wider literature on women's war (photo)journalism can be found in Linda Steiner, 'Gender under fire in war reporting', in *Handbook on Gender and War*, ed. by Simona Sharoni, Julia Welland, Linda Steiner and Jennifer Pedersen (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), pp. 313-34.

photographing the Spanish Civil War should not be attributed solely to this factor.<sup>346</sup> Rather, it is critical to consider the deeply-held ideological motivations for women's participation in photographing war, just as it is critical to consider women's participation as militants. Taro, part of a photographic trio also including Robert Capa and David Seymour, was a committed anti-fascist and a German-Polish Jewish woman who had fled her home country because of rising antisemitism and her political beliefs.<sup>347</sup> Kati Horna and Margaret Michaelis, also Jewish women of Hungarian and Austrian origin respectively, were both anarchists, who used their cameras to showcase the experience of the revolutionary rearguard and daily life outside of the front.<sup>348</sup> Elken and Hodgson were both nurses who used photography to document their participation within the International Brigades, again visualising war beyond the frontlines.<sup>349</sup> The professional photography of these women, like the vernacular images I will discuss later in this thesis, continually challenged the conceptualisation of war as a masculine space. By operating as female war photographers, they forged their own space within the masculine environment of war, and their images continually depict women's presence within the Spanish Civil War, as militants, nurses, and civilians, whom they invest with a sense of agency and power in order to challenge and demand action from international audiences in France, Britain and America.<sup>350</sup>

However, while these female photographers challenged the masculine connotations of war photography, their images of women's presence in the rearguard and homefront of war were often republished to support gendered norms of war. While Taro's photograph in Figure 2.26 depicts the mourning woman as the protagonist of the image, directly engaging with the viewer in a call for support and solidarity, similar photographs taken by Taro, Seymour, and Capa were republished in commercial photographic albums compiled by the Spanish Republican government's Department of Publicity. These images redefined women as passive, civilian victims of the war, an example of which can be seen in Figure 2.27.

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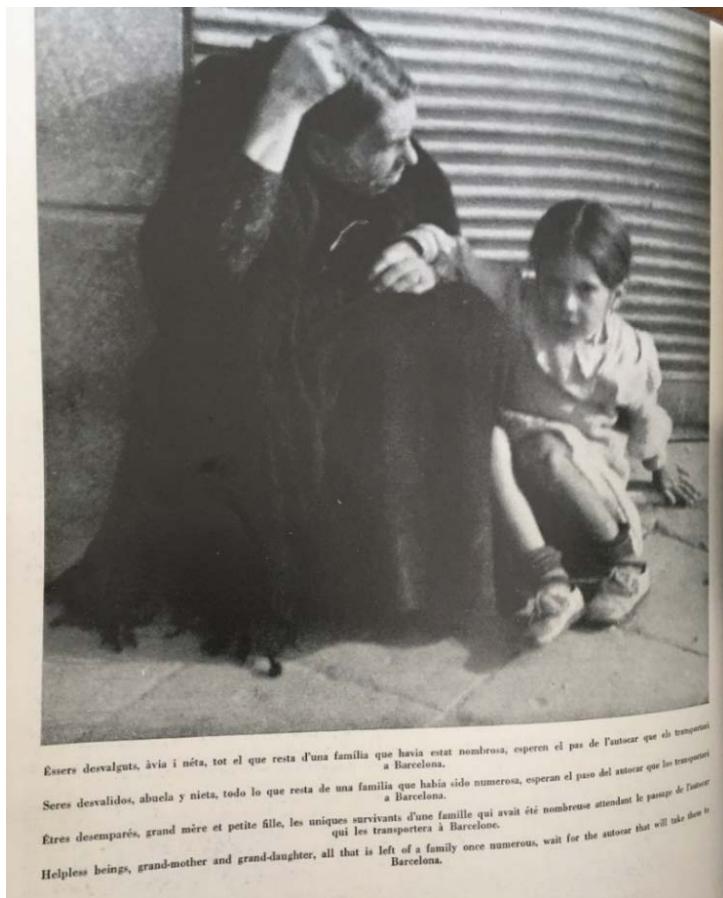
<sup>346</sup> Steiner, p. 314. For further discussion on this within the context of the Spanish Civil War see: Deacon, 'Going to Spain', pp. 74-5 and Meuret, p. 86.

<sup>347</sup> Taro helped build the persona of Robert Capa alongside her partner Andre Friedmann, and she initially distributed her photographs under his name before striking out on her own. Taro's history and photographic practices are thoroughly discussed in: Irme Schabe, *Gerda Taro* (Stuttgart: Edition Axel Menges, 2019); Jane Rogoyska, *Gerda Taro: Inventing Robert Capa* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013); Cynthia Young, *The Mexican Suitcase* (New York: International Centre of Photography, 2010).

<sup>348</sup> Rubio, Almudena, 'Margaret Michaelis and Kati Horna: Female CNT-FAI Photographers during the Spanish Civil War', 18 July 2019, <https://iisg.amsterdam/en/blog/margaret-michaelis-and-kati-horna> (accessed 13 September 2022).

<sup>349</sup> Agustín-Lacruz and Blanco-Domingo, pp. 67-9.

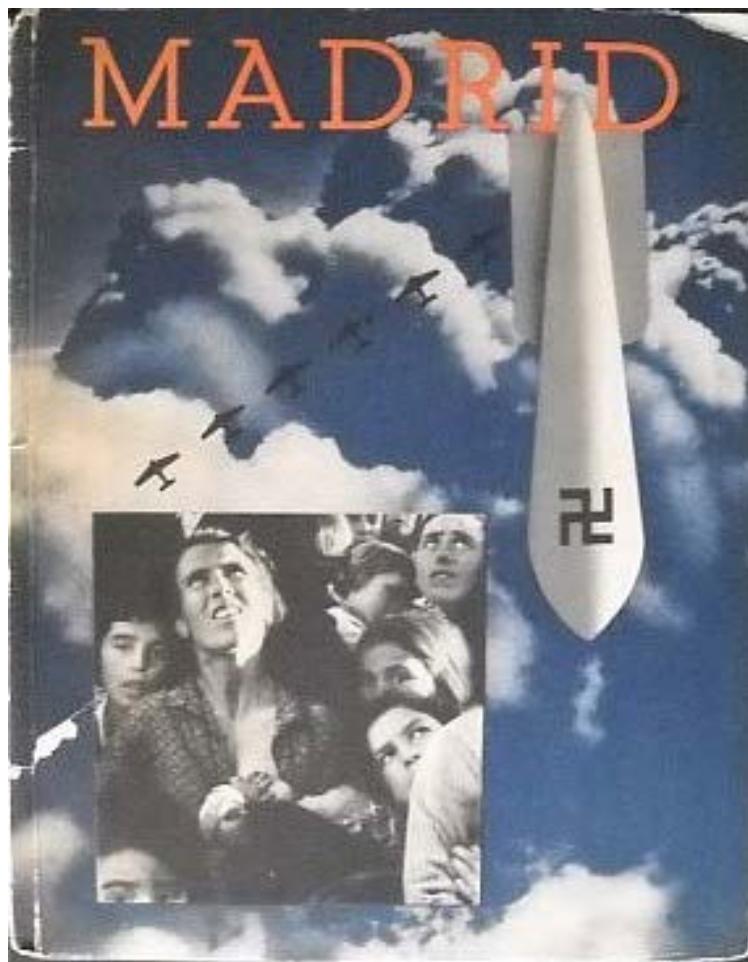
<sup>350</sup> It is important to frame this discussion, however, by noting that these none of these women were Spanish natives, and the question of their war photography, and its framings of women, can open up questions of exoticisation and paternalism, as discussed by Rosón Villena and Douglas, p. 467.



**Figure 2.27**, Uncredited, *Madrid*, photobook, 1937, Comissariat de Propaganda de la Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona.

As Sebastiaan Faber has discussed, after the initial months of the war the Second Republic presented itself within a humanitarian gaze, a visual strategy that relied on photographs of women as victims of the fascist war complex.<sup>351</sup> The photobook *Madrid*, compiled by international photojournalists including David 'Chim' Seymour and Robert Capa and published by the Generalitat de Catalunya, illustrated the suffering and exile of the Spanish people during the war. Images of women, children, corpses and ruined buildings dominated the contents of this book, with each captioned in Spanish, Catalan, English and French, indicating these images were intended for an international gaze. Published in February 1937, less than one year after than the anarchist photo album in Figure 2.14, it reflected the new positioning of women within the narrative of the Spanish Civil War. The photobook was published in the context of Nationalists gaining more control over Spain, food and resource shortages for the Republicans and Madrid under siege. Within the visual narrative of the Spanish Civil War, women were no longer revolutionary agents of change or symbols of collective anti-fascism; rather they were passive victims of war.

<sup>351</sup> Faber, pp. 25-7.



**Figure 2.28**, Agustí Centelles (uncredited), *Madrid*, 1937, Comissariat de Propaganda de la Generalitat de Catalunya, Barcelona.

Constructing this emotionally vulnerable photography relied on re-making the meaning of photographs already present in the visual economy. The cover of *Madrid* in Figure 2.28 cropped Agustí Centelles' photograph of a mother and her child at a public land reform meeting in May 1936, prior to the beginning of the war, and placed it within a photo-montage where she looked up in fear at Nazi planes and bombs. Placed against a backdrop of violence, this image of the Madonna-esque mother and child is presented as a call for aid, positioning her as a victim in need of international salvation rather than a politically-engaged woman.

These photographs of women were designed for an international, humanitarian audience to mobilise support and aid for the Republican government. In order for the photographic female body to activate and create humanitarian 'communities of emotion and action', women had to be framed as passive victims of war, rather than the revolutionary participants circulated in earlier photographs.<sup>352</sup> In doing so, the Republican movement re-

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<sup>352</sup> Rosón and Douglas, pp. 460-1.

asserted the patriarchal boundaries of gender that had been dislocated earlier in the war, revealing once more the contradictory and complex nature of women's photographic representation in the Spanish Civil War. The photographic rhetoric of victimhood constructed by the Republican government is yet another indication of the need to interrogate photographs as historical objects and trace their material usage, even as the institutions that guide the production and circulation of these images discourage looking into their creation.

## 2.8 Conclusion

The photographic construction of wartime femininities was complex, with different and evolving narratives imposed onto militant women. Photographic meaning is not static nor embedded into the image; rather, photographic meaning is socially constructed and continually redefined. Contemporary reproductions of photographs of militant women in newspaper articles, museum exhibits, and commodified memorabilia inscribe their subjects within a celebratory mythology of rebellious women—a way of seeing that does not disturb the gendered frameworks of war but rather reinforces them through framing these women as spectacular aberrations.<sup>353</sup> Yet, within this chapter, I have shown that, contrary to how contemporary reproductions use these images, these photographs were used to reassert patriarchal ideologies of war, a process that denied and disowned women's own revolutionary actions and reimagined them within conventional narratives of wartime femininity. In order to deepen our understanding of gender and conflict, I have demonstrated it is critical to historicise the production and circulation of photographs to understand both the role of images in constituting ideologies of power and the ways in which militant women navigated these gendered frameworks.

Tracing the journey of these images from photographer's studios to the pages of newspapers and postcards, through archives and censorship offices, it is clear that the visibility of militant women in Ireland and Spain were riddled with contradictions, and that these photographs were a battleground of constant negotiation and redefinition of meaning. There are distinctions in how women's militancy was photographed in Ireland and Spain. In both, however, a common narrative emerged wherein photographs of militant women were reimagined within conventional narratives of wartime femininity in order to alleviate the cultural anxiety caused by women's presence on the front. In Ireland, photographs of overt militancy were rejected from the nationalist mythos being constructed by the Catholic press,

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<sup>353</sup> Noble, pp. 140-1.

which overwhelmingly focused on male participants. In Spain, women were photographed within a revolutionary aesthetic that saw them carry guns and wear uniforms; yet, this was tempered through the continual reinforcement of their femininity, which attempted to position them as non-threatening to the patriarchal order. In both countries, women's active participation in war was seen to threaten the masculinity of their male comrades, and thus the legitimacy of the nation state. Photographs were an instrumental tool to reconstruct the gendered order that had been dislocated by women's militant activism.

Narratives of domestic femininity were a potent tool to reinforce gendered ideologies in both Ireland and Spain. Postcards and newspaper articles in Ireland and Spain re-positioned militant women within the ideologically normative archetypes of mothers, wives and nurses. Using photographic tropes of domestic life, patriarchal order at the front was reinforced and women's roles were positioned on the periphery of war, within familiar narratives that emphasised biologically essentialist notions of womanhood and which framed the active participation of women in war as a temporary aberration. In her examination of women's imperial photography, Laura Wexler argued that 'domestic photography hoped to make the visible disappear', a sentiment that is evident in the domestic redefining of photographs of militant women.<sup>354</sup> The *Catholic Bulletin* used the trappings of maternal domesticity to obscure Markievicz's active involvement in revolutionary violence, whilst in Spain, *Crónica* used the marriage of Alfonsa López as a way to demonstrate that the patriarchal domestic order was in place at the front, through positioning López as an obedient wife first, and a militiawomen second. This chapter demonstrates that the contexts in which press photographs were published and circulated shaped gendered ideologies of war. Moreover, it shows that the erasure of women's militancy from the public narrative of war was in place during the conflict itself, rather than solely a feature of the post-war reconstruction of gendered norms.

The gendered politics of mourning and victimhood were another way to reinscribe women within conventional gendered narratives of war, with Irish and Spanish press and commercial photobooks emphasising the passive victimhood and suffering of women during war. Spanish propagandistic photobooks deliberately cropped and edited photographs to perpetuate a narrative of brutality and victimhood; while in Ireland, reports on British reprisals against women were used to generate outrage from the public. The shift from focusing on women as agents of revolution and war to victims marked a return to the patriarchal narrative of combat, where male soldiers fought on behalf of women.<sup>355</sup> Yet these photographs also

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<sup>354</sup> Wexler, p. 35.

<sup>355</sup> Enloe, *Maneuvers*, p. 218.

offered the potential for subverting these norms. In Ireland and Spain, women used the photographer's gaze as a way to signify protest and anger, emotions not afforded to women when they were constructed as victims. In Ireland, Cumann na mBan women used the gendered visibility afforded to them by Catholic mourning rituals to stage public protests, while in Spain, photographers such as Gerda Taro sought to maintain women's emotional agency in their pictures, incorporating their anger into the photographic narrative. Examining how militant women were seen and photographed during this period of shifting gender discourse illustrates both the role of photographs in shaping ideologies and behaviours, and how women negotiated the complex dynamics involved in being seen.

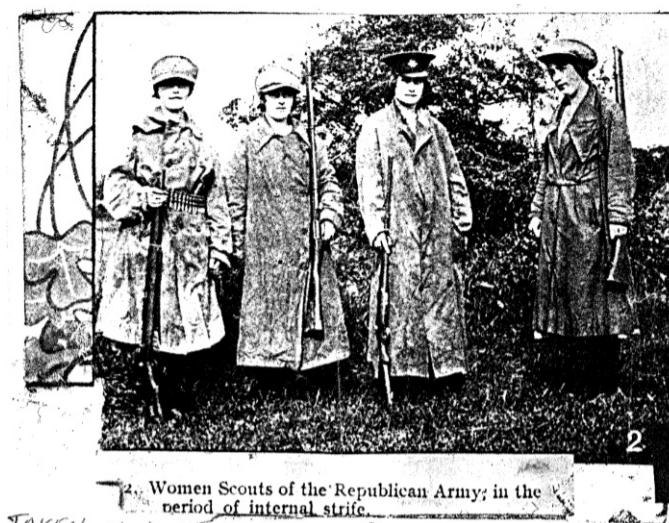
Further to this, my analysis of the Cumann na mBan portraiture and Gerda Taro's photography has shown that changing our focus from women's role as photographic subjects to active agents within the photographic process offers an alternative narrative of war. Throughout this chapter, I have drawn attention to the importance of examining how militant women produced and circulated their own photographs, and how they negotiated how they were seen within the photographs of others. I argue that we can use these moments of subversion alongside militant women's own photographic practices to construct an alternative gaze, thus positioning these photographic objects within a narrative of resistance against erasure. In doing so, more can be understood about how women constructed their own revolutionary identities and practices during war, and how they continually contested their exclusion from state narratives of war. I continue this focus on how militant women engaged with photography as resistance in the next chapter, where I will explore how photographs of militant women continued to be active sites of contested meaning in the aftermath of war, and how Irish and Spanish militant women reclaimed their control over the photographic images.



## Chapter 3

### ‘Don’t Let My Name Be Forgotten From History’: Contesting Erasure through Militant Women’s Photographic Practices, 1920s-1950 | 1960s-1980s

‘Kisses to you all, and [I ask that] you and my *compañeras* do not cry. Don’t let my name be forgotten from history’.<sup>356</sup> The Spanish Communist activist Julia Conesa wrote this evocative plea for remembrance on the eve of her execution in 1939 as a postscript in her final letter to her mother. Writing in her unpublished memoirs in 1945, the Irish feminist and nationalist Hanna Sheehy Skeffington expressed a similar fear, as she despaired that her memories of the revolution, and those of her female comrades, would be ‘lost in old newspaper files or dusty museums’.<sup>357</sup> Embedded within these different contexts of post-conflict processes of institutional erasure and delegitimisation, Irish and Spanish militant women were consumed by the drive to record and remember their experiences of war and revolution. In this chapter, I explore how women used photography to defy the processes of erasure imposed upon them during and after war.



**Figure 3.1**, ‘Women Scouts of the Republican Army’, Sighle Humphreys Papers, P0106-1461, UCD Archives, Dublin.

<sup>356</sup> ‘Besos para todos, que ni tú ni mis compañeras lloréis. Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia’. Carlos Fonseca, *Trece Rosas y la Rosa Catorce* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 2014), p. 329. Original translated from Spanish by Jessica McIvor.

<sup>357</sup> Margaret Ward, *Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Suffragette and Sinn Féiner: Her Memoirs and Political Writings* (UCD Press: Dublin, 2017), p. 2.

These photographic practices of defiant visibility were wide-ranging, encompassing both the remaking of existing images and the production of their own photographs. As Figure 3.1 shows, scrapbooks offered women a means to make a place for themselves in the historical narrative.<sup>358</sup> Scores of Irish women used scrapbooking to commemorate their revolutionary experiences, an example of which can be seen in Figure 3.1. The Irish militant Sighle Humphreys cut out a photograph of herself and her fellow Cumann na mBan members, originally published in the mainstream press as an anonymous depiction of the degeneracy of Irish militant women, and pasted it into her scrapbook.<sup>359</sup> In doing so, she reclaimed this image not as an example of women's brutality, but as a demonstration of their participation and presence in the revolution. Humphreys' scrapbook was a vehicle to tell her own narrative of war, a space where she used photography to reshape the Irish revolutionary narrative and challenge the processes of redefinition and erasure imposed upon her and her comrades.



Milagros Querol. Esta foto, a petición suya, se la hicieron en la cárcel de Valencia. Cuando la penaron a muerte quería dejar un último recuerdo a sus padres. Después fue commutada.

**Figure 3.2, 'Milagros Querol', in Tomasa Cuevas, *Testimonios de Mujeres*, p. 816.**

<sup>358</sup> Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing With Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 4.

<sup>359</sup> Peter Costello, *Hearts Grown Brutal: The Irish Revolution in Literature from Parnell to the Death of Yeats, 1891-1939* (London: Gill and Macmillan, 1977), p. 112 and p. 142. The original caption to this image was 'Hearts Grown Brutal?: Women Scouts of the Republican Army', however, Humphreys tore off the opening sentence, and in doing so challenged the narrative of transgression and degeneracy that had been imposed on militant women by the press.

Beyond this, militant women's photography served as a memento mori for the future.<sup>360</sup> The Spanish Communist activist Milagros Querol asked for the portrait in Figure 3.2 to be taken of her while she was interned in a prison camp in Valencia in 1939. To look at this image without context, it is a seemingly banal photograph of a young woman, yet, for Querol this was an act of defiance. Imprisoned and condemned to death, Querol used this photograph to interrupt the narrative of her demise.<sup>361</sup> With her hair neatly coiffed and in clean clothes, Querol's portrait disrupted the Francoist narrative of Republican femininity, as she presented herself not as a corrupted criminal or bloodthirsty harpy, but as a young woman proud of her ideology and her participation in a lost war.<sup>362</sup> After her death sentence was commuted to imprisonment, she sent this portrait on to her family, and she later published it within a collection of women's testimonies, where this photograph continued to serve as a physical remnant of her defiance.

Militant women's vernacular photographic practices allowed them to re-write and disrupt hegemonic narratives of war. Through the reproduction, recreation, and re-circulation of photographs, Irish and Spanish women constructed subversive counter-narratives of war, a form of post-conflict memory activism that allowed them to articulate and preserve their militant identities, resist state forces of erasure, and steer future remembrance within the cultural memory of war.<sup>363</sup> While their efforts did not substantively alter the patriarchal narratives of war, they are testament to how militant women continually resisted against erasure and preserved their own memories and experiences.

In this chapter, I trace militant women's photographic practices and engagement throughout post-war Ireland and Spain, examining how they mediated and preserved their experiences through photography, and how they circulated these photographs across the radical press and testimonial collections. Through these subversive photographic practices, I argue that women constructed an alternative gaze on war and gender that disrupted state narratives of the Irish revolution and the Spanish Civil War. As these photographs moved between private networks to the public spaces of the press and the archive, they challenged the prescriptive, gendered narrative of war composed within both

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<sup>360</sup> Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 108.

<sup>361</sup> Campt, *Listening to Images*, p. 109.

<sup>362</sup> Aurora Gómez Morcillo, *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politics* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2010, p. 90.

<sup>363</sup> This definition of memory activism as the struggle to produce cultural memory and steer future remembrance is taken from Ann Rigney's article 'Remembering Hope: Transnational Activism Beyond the Traumatic'. Ann Rigney, 'Remembering Hope: Transnational Activism Beyond the Traumatic', *Memory Studies*, 11.3 (2018), 368-80, p. 372.

state institutions and resistance organisations. By examining how women crafted these alternative narratives in two distinct time periods—the immediate aftermath of war from the 1920s to 1950s, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations of war in the 1960s and 1980s, I will demonstrate how militant women continually contested their erasure from public narratives. Through this longitudinal approach, I will chart the myriad of ways in which women documented their resistance against erasure, and the non-linear circulation of these photographs within multiple, interwoven photographic networks. Through this approach, I will also add nuance to our understanding of how militant women negotiated their visibility during the post-conflict period, thereby emphasising the complexity of militant women's visibility in Irish and Spanish narratives of war.

Figure 3.1 and 3.2 highlight two key considerations critical to understanding women's militancy in post-conflict Ireland and Spain. Firstly, that the rhetoric of silence and invisibility characterising militant women's presence in post-war environments has overshadowed their own efforts to resist against erasure. While both official institutions and resistance organisations excluded militant women from cultural narratives of war, women remained central to the operation of these movements in Ireland and Spain. Women smuggled information and weapons, organised and maintained clandestine networks, led protests, produced and distributed propaganda, intimidated jurors, and used their public trials and arrests to challenge the state. Yet, their participation in these organisations has continually been neglected and undermined.<sup>364</sup> This assumption of invisibility and inactivity has distorted the continuous histories of feminist activism in Ireland and Spain, negating women's agency to instead reframe them as passive victims of a patriarchal order.<sup>365</sup> Using militant women's photographic practices, I problematise this rhetoric of invisibility, and I will demonstrate how women engaged with photographs to attest to their participation within gendered narratives of war, to contest their erasure from these narratives, and to redefine militancy to legitimise and recognise the diversity of women's roles during war and resistance.

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<sup>364</sup> Siobhra Aiken, “‘Sinn Féin Permits’; Mark Coen, “‘The Work of Some Irresponsible Women’: Jurors, Ghosts and Embrace in the Irish Free State”, *Law and History Review*, 38.4 (2020), 777-810; Morrison, ‘The Bureau of Military History and Female Republican Activism’; Yusta Rodrigo, ‘Las Mujeres en la Resistencia Antifranquista’; Cabrero Blanco, ‘Tejiendo las Redes de la Democracia’; Pilar Domínguez Prats, ‘La Actividad Política de las Mujeres Republicanas en México’, *Arbor*, 185.735 (2009), 75-85.

<sup>365</sup> Connolly, *The Irish Women’s Movement*, p. 69. Connolly argues that analysing these ‘forgotten’ periods of activism is crucial to developing a comprehensive understanding of Irish feminism beyond iconic representations of exceptional women and peak movements. Approaching feminist activism as a process of continuity challenges the piecemeal perspective on the Irish feminist movement and provides a deeper consideration of women’s agency and activism within periods of post-war abeyance. A similar argument has been made by Celia Valiente in regard to women’s movements in Francoist Spain: Celia Valiente, ‘Social Movements in Abeyance in Non-Democracies: The Women’s Movement in Franco’s Spain’, in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, ed. by Patrick Coy (Bingley: Emerald, 2015), pp. 259-90.

Secondly, in order to understand militant women used photography to contest erasure, I argue that we must broaden our conceptual frameworks and adopt new sources that have been overlooked within academic research. Previous work re-locating women within post-conflict narratives of resistance has focused on oral history and literature; however, in this chapter I address the importance of photography as a vehicle for women to contest their erasure.<sup>366</sup> In particular, I focus on women's vernacular photographic practices, considering ordinary, everyday images that exist outside of the canon of photojournalistic and art historical images.<sup>367</sup> I address a range of genres including commissioned studio portraits, amateur snapshots, and clandestine prison photography, all of which have commonly been excluded from considerations of war photography.<sup>368</sup> These photographs are not as visually striking as the images discussed in the previous chapter, but they reflect an everyday practice of image-making that offered militant women a way to articulate their experiences, capture their aspirations for the future, and create a sense of community, history and belonging.<sup>369</sup> These vernacular images are sites of both cultural normativity and defiance, and I argue that analysing these photographs offers a new perspective into how women articulated, preserved and circulated their experiences of war.<sup>370</sup>

I begin this chapter by firstly establishing the dynamics of how militant women were seen in the aftermath of war, focusing on state propaganda and mainstream newspapers. While women's presence in post-war Ireland and Spain has frequently been characterised by absence, my study of the public circulation of photographs of militant women will demonstrate how they were embedded into the construction of the Irish Free State and Francoist dictatorship. Building on processes already established during war, pro-state propaganda and press redefined militant women as threats and contrasted them against traditional imagery of idealised Catholic femininity. In doing so, they excluded militant women from national mythologies of conflict. In the second section of this chapter, I explore how militant women countered this process through their photographic practices in the radical press. Focusing on the Irish republican newspaper *An Phoblacht* (1925-1936) and the Spanish exile magazine *Mujeres Antifascistas Espanolas* (1946-1950), I historicise how women writing in

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<sup>366</sup> For example, Margaret Ward, *In Their Own Voice: Women and Irish Nationalism* (Dublin: Attic Press, 1995); Mangini; Herrmann.

<sup>367</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, 'Vernacular Photographies: Response to a Questionnaire', *History of Photography*, 24.3 (2000), 229-31, p. 229.

<sup>368</sup> In taking this approach, I draw from Oldfield's work on women's war photography in the Americas. Oldfield, 'Calling the Shots', p. 28.

<sup>369</sup> Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 7.

<sup>370</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith, 'Archive of the Ordinary: Jason Lazarus, *Too Hard To Keep*', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 17.2 (2018), 198-206, p. 200.

these publications used photographs of militant women to articulate their own revolutionary identity, challenge the erasure and delegitimisation imposed on them by resistance organisations and the state, and validate their continuing activism. However, while women used the radical press as a space to contest their erasure, they had to negotiate this visibility within the gendered dynamics of male-dominated dissident organisations, which resulted in contradictory narratives that did not substantively alter patriarchal frameworks of militancy.

In the final section of this chapter, I examine how militant women leveraged these pockets of defiant visibility developed in the press and private albums to construct alternative narratives of war and resistance within testimonial memoirs. In Siobhán de Paor's 'Blaze Away With Your Little Gun' (1968) and Tomasa Cuevas' *Testimonios de Mujeres* (1985) prison photographs were used to publicly condemn women's erasure from institutional narratives of the Irish Revolution and Spanish Civil War. Both these testimonies emerged during moments of commemoration during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Easter Rising and the Spanish Civil War. While the circumstances of commemoration were different in both contexts, with the Irish government seeking to unify the public within a singular revolutionary mythology and the newly-democratic Spanish government attempting to bypass the importance of the anniversary amidst political turmoil, women's experiences of war continued to be neglected.<sup>371</sup> Commemoration is a critical moment to observe shifts in cultural memory, and I argue that women's renewed circulation of testimonial photographs was an attempt to engage the public in reshaping institutional narratives of the past to actively include women's marginalised experiences.<sup>372</sup>

Irish and Spanish militant women used photography to record and share their own experiences, and challenge their marginalisation within institutional narratives of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War. Ultimately, I propose that women's photographic practices during the post-conflict period offers a new way of seeing militant women, a framework based on their own gaze and control over their visibility. In the pursuit of this visibility, they navigated the patriarchal, gendered dynamics of resistance organisations, negotiating between the intersecting dynamics of erasure and visibility. I conclude this chapter

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<sup>371</sup> Roisin Higgins, *Transforming 1916: Meaning, Memory and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2013), p. 56. Lorraine Ryan, 'For Whom the Dominant Memory Tolls: The Suppression and Re-Emergence of Republican Memory in Spain', in *The Essence and the Margin: National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Memory Culture*, ed. by Laura Rorato and Anna Saunders (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 119-35, (p. 128). As I will discuss further in Chapter 4, the transition to democracy was marked by an amnesty-focused approach that sought to avoid a repeat of the Civil War. For more see Paloma Aguilar, 'Collective Memory of the Spanish Civil War: The Case of the Political Amnesty in the Spanish Transition to Democracy', *Democratization*, 4.4 (1997), 88-109.

<sup>372</sup> Frawley, p. 7.

by examining the impact of women's counter-narratives of war on both post-war public narratives of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, and their latent role in the re-assessment of these narratives in the late twentieth-century. Secondly, I explore how actively integrating women's revolutionary photographic practices into our discussion of conflict in Ireland and Spain can reshape exclusionary narratives of war and enrich our understanding of gender in the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War. Finally, I consider how in our own attempts to recover and integrate women's militancy into mainstream narratives and commemorations of war, we face similar complex entanglements of erasure and visibility.

### 3.1      **Weaponising Visibility: Redefining Militant Women in Post-Conflict Ireland and Spain**

In the aftermath of civil war, the governments of the Irish Free State and Francoist Spain sought to re-establish traditional gendered roles by embedding Catholic gendered ideologies into the fabric of the new nation-state, in a continuation of the processes of erasure I discussed in Chapter 2. Gender politics are crucial to the consolidation of the new regimes, and in Ireland and Spain, the state imposed an idealised image of maternal, Catholic femininity onto women in order to reconstruct the patriarchal order that had been disturbed by war.<sup>373</sup> Within this process of reconstruction, women were excluded from public life, silenced both as participants on the losing side of the war and as women.<sup>374</sup> In Ireland, under both Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil governments, politicians used the idealisation of domestic femininity to justify restrictions on women's employment and reproductive rights, which culminated in the 1937 Constitution that explicitly enforced women's subordinate position as wives and mothers.<sup>375</sup> Similarly, under the Francoist regime, married women were forcibly dismissed from their workspaces in 1942, with financial sanctions imposed on women who continued to work.<sup>376</sup> In conjunction with the restriction on women's civil rights, both Irish and Spanish governments used photography to construct a dichotomy of 'pure' and 'impure'

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<sup>373</sup> Amor, p. 151-2.

<sup>374</sup> Mary Ann Valiulis, 'Defining Their Role in the New State: Irishwomen's Protest against the Juries Act of 1927', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 18.1 (1992), 43-60, p. 43; Carbayo-Abengózar, pp. 80-2. The idea of 'losing twice' comes from the author Dulce Chacón, who has argued that women in Spain 'not only lost the war... but also their voice'. Sophie Milquet, 'Women's Memory of the Spanish Civil War: The Power of Words', in *Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations on War, Genocide and Political Violence*, ed. by Ayşe Güл Altıñay and Andrea Pető (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 189-203, (p. 189).

<sup>375</sup> Maria Luddy, 'A "Sinister and Retrogressive" Proposal: Irish Women's Opposition to the 1937 Draft Constitution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 15 (2005), 175-95.

<sup>376</sup> Helen Graham, 'Gender and the State' in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. by Jo Labanyi and Helen Graham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 182-95, (p. 184).

femininity, with traditional gendered imagery contrasted against war photographs of militant women, who were thus redefined as threats to the new, national order. The continued circulation of photographs of militant women was a tactic to legitimise the power of the state and smear resistance organisations.<sup>377</sup> In this section, I analyse how the re-establishment of Catholic gendered ideologies defined how women were seen within the construction of cultural narratives of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War, focusing on the gendered dichotomy of women as either devoted mothers or militant ‘furies’.

In Ireland and Spain, the production and circulation of photographs within state propaganda and the mainstream press were key in redefining womanhood within strict, patriarchal parameters.<sup>378</sup> Within these cultural discourses, the figure of the militant woman was used to symbolise the illegitimate and emasculated nature of the Irish anti-Treaty IRA and the Spanish Republicans, while traditional gendered imagery of women as mothers and wives was used to represent the legitimacy of the Irish Free State and Francoist dictatorship.<sup>379</sup> This mediation of militant women’s visibility was in line with the previous photographic practices of the Irish Free State and Spanish Nationalists’ propaganda and press departments, as during conflict, they had exploited the figure of the militant woman to create anxiety and tension. Indeed, the pro-Treaty and Nationalist press had maintained circulation of this imagery long after the Irish anti-Treaty movement and the Spanish Republicans had erased militant women from their own visual narratives of war. Publications in support of the Irish Free State and Francoist dictatorship continued this narrative in the aftermath of war. For example, P.S O’Hegarty’s *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, published in 1924, clearly delineated between the militant women of the anti-Treaty IRA, who had ‘steadily deteriorated’ throughout the civil war, and the respectable women of Inginidhe na hÉireann, who ‘never forgot that it could not and should not do men’s work’.<sup>380</sup> This same dichotomous approach to femininity was seen in the

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<sup>377</sup> For more on the role of women within the consolidation of the Irish and Spanish post-war states see: Tricia Cusack, ‘Janus and Gender: Women and the Nation’s Backward Look’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 6.4 (2000), 541-61 and Eider de Dios Fernández, ‘Domesticidad y Familia: Ambigüedad y Contradicción en los Modelos de Feminidad en el Franquismo’, *Feminismos*, 23 (2014), 23-46.

<sup>378</sup> For example, see discussion of gendered imagery in Louise Ryan, ‘The Aonach Tailteann, the Irish Press and Gendered Symbols of National Identity in the 1920s and 1930s’ in *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues*, ed. by Alan Bairner (Dublin: UCD Press, 2005), pp. 69-84 and José Joaquín Rodríguez Moreno, ‘La Imposición de los Valores Católicos Patriarcales a través de la Censura en las Revistas Juveniles Femeninas de la España Franquista (1941-1977)’, *Feminismo/s*, 28 (2016), 236-68.

<sup>379</sup> Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, pp. 212-21; Kathleen M. Vernon, ‘Women, Fashion and the Spanish Civil War: From the Fashion Parade to the Victory Parade’, in *The New Women International: Representations in Photography and Film from the 1870s through the 1960s*, ed. by Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), pp. 273-90.

<sup>380</sup> P.S O’Hegarty quoted in Aidan Beatty, ‘Counter-Revolutionary Masculinities: Gender, Social Control and Revising the Chronologies of Irish Nationalist Politics’, *Irish Studies Review*, 29.2 (2021), 229-42, p. 230.

Francoist press, where mainstream newspapers and women's magazines such as *Y: Revista de la Mujer* asserted that Republican women had been turned into 'pitiable caricatures of men' during warfare, while Nationalist Spain had maintained the femininity and purity of its women by allowing them to 'serve the nation exclusively as women'.<sup>381</sup>

Within the public narratives of war constructed by the post-conflict state, militant women's photographic visibility was weaponised against them to delegitimise their participation. Within the Irish press, the state used the continuing visibility of women's militancy in the post-war period as a way to establish republicanism as a threat, arguing that republican women's transgression of Irish Catholic womanhood was a betrayal of the nation.<sup>382</sup> Photographs of women published across the press and other publications emphasised militant women's martial actions and transgressive behaviours, departing from the visualisation of women within traditional gendered frameworks as discussed in Chapter 2. For example, Sean O'Faoláin's 1934 biography of Constance Markievicz illustrated how the visibility of revolutionary women was appropriated to reinforce the patriarchal gender politics of the Irish Free State.

Constance Markievicz's legacy in the post-war political environment was complex. She continued to be a key figure in the post-war republican movement, where she led propaganda campaigns that attacked both the Irish Free State and the conservatism of the Catholic Church, campaigned for the release of political prisoners, and was an elected T.D for Sinn Féin.<sup>383</sup> After her election, she was once again arrested and released in December 1923. After her imprisonment, she entered a period of depression and disillusionment, where she left Sinn Féin for the socially-conservative Fianna Fáil, led by Eamon de Valera, and abdicated her presidency of Cumann na mBan—a political trajectory that subsequently led to Irish revisionist historians in the late 1920s and 1930s framing her as a confused dilettante.<sup>384</sup> She began to focus on using her position in local government for social justice and philanthropy. In particular, she argued for reforms to combat poverty, which would inform her popular legacy after her death. In 1927, she successfully stood as Fianna Fáil candidate, but died a month later before she could take her seat. Her funeral was widely attended and reflected the complexities of Markievicz's own politics; with members of Cumann na mBan, the Irish Citizen Army, the IRA, and the Workers Union of Ireland marching in the procession as

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<sup>381</sup> Carmen Izaca, 'Que hachers de María y Marta', *Y: Revista de la Mujer*, 3 March 1938, p. 52. There is no credit given to the photographer in this issue.

<sup>382</sup> Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and Irish Press*, p. 221 and p. 242-3.

<sup>383</sup> Arrington, pp. 240-5.

<sup>384</sup> Arrington, p. 251.

thousands lined the streets. Markievicz's legacy as a revolutionary figure was continually redefined after her death. While Markievicz herself had constructed an explicitly militant image through her photographic portraits and writings, this vision of Irish revolutionary femininity conflicted with the Irish Free State's newly restored gendered order. As seen in the previous chapter, de Valera's eulogy for Markievicz positioned her within the strict gendered dynamics of Irish nationalism constructed by Fianna Fáil, excising her radical politics in the process. Markievicz's comrades within socialist, feminist and republican circles denounced this redefinition as a political ploy.<sup>385</sup> Beyond the battle to control Markievicz's legacy within republican circles, Markievicz's presence as an active participant in the revolutionary period was used to critique the Irish revolution and wider nationalist movement.

Seán O'Faoláin's *Constance Markievicz: or the Average Revolutionary* was the first biography written on Markievicz, and it codified the depiction of her as an unfeminine, inauthentic dilettante, whose true contributions to Irish society came not from her participation in the revolution but her philanthropic endeavours after the civil war.<sup>386</sup> O'Faoláin was a popular writer and journalist who had previously worked as director of publicity for the anti-Treaty IRA during the Civil War, before growing disillusioned with republicanism and its sacrificial discourse in 1924.<sup>387</sup> This biography gave him the opportunity to attack the aspects of the revolution he opposed within the form of Markievicz. Undermining her political commitments and condemning her failure to act as a 'proper' mother to her children, Markievicz's womanhood and her transgression of the gendered order was a key theme of the book; a theme that would be repeated throughout subsequent biographies.<sup>388</sup> O'Faoláin used photography to underline Markievicz's gendered transgression, as he opened the book with a photograph of Markievicz as a young debutante in 1896 to contrast against the overt militancy displayed in Markievicz's revolutionary portraiture.

O'Faoláin used Figure 3.3, which Markievicz had commissioned herself, to delegitimise her role in the revolution.<sup>389</sup> It was positioned in the middle of a chapter on Markievicz's revolutionary politics, which detailed her involvement in the Easter Rising and her subsequent imprisonment. O'Faoláin described Markevitz's participation with an

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<sup>385</sup> Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism*, p. 89.

<sup>386</sup> Sean O'Faoláin, *Constance Markievicz: or the Average Revolutionary* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934). Karen Steele, 'Constance Markievicz's Allegorical Garden: Femininity, Militancy and the Press, 1909-1915', *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 29.4 (2000), 423-47, pp. 443-4.

<sup>387</sup> Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 25-30.

<sup>388</sup> Arrington, pp. 270-3.

<sup>389</sup> O'Faoláin, pp. 295-6.

infantising tone, describing her as taking to the ICA like a ‘child with a new toy’ who patrolled the streets with a pop-gun and ‘the smile of the ungrown imp’.<sup>390</sup>



**Figure 3.3**, Keogh Brothers, ‘Constance Markievicz in the uniform of the Irish Citizen Army’, printed in Sean O’Faoláin, *Constance Markievicz or the Average Revolutionary*, p. 221.

He framed Markievicz’s action as driven not by a genuine, revolutionary passion, which he argued would have seen her participate in revolutionary nationalism through more gender-appropriate frameworks, but by a desire for theatricality. He underscored this argument by repositioning Figure 3.3 as an example of Markievicz’s need for attention, framing it as an insincere imitation of revolutionary spirit rather than an articulation of her own militant identity. Designed for public consumption, Figure 3.3 depicted Markievicz in uniform and an ostrich feathered hat, leaning against a pillar with a revolver in her hands. In the aftermath of the Easter Rising, however, the photographic representations of Markievicz in the press and nationalist visual culture were mediated through gendered frameworks that depicted her as a wife and mother, emphasising her gender rather than her militancy.<sup>391</sup>

<sup>390</sup> O’Faoláin, p. 198 and p. 204.

<sup>391</sup> Baylis, ‘What to Wear for a Revolution’, pp. 96-7.

O'Faoláin's deliberate use of Figure 3.3 as a way to disparage Markievicz, therefore, played off a wider public discourse within the Irish Free State that condemned republican women's militancy. This biography provoked mixed responses, as some, such as the revisionist historian F.S.L Lyons praised the book for its 'cold truth' and deconstruction of Markievicz, while republican women broadly condemned the book. In response to this biography, women such as Dorothy Macardle and Esther Roper challenged this perception of Markievicz in their own revolutionary histories yet in doing so, they positioned Markievicz within an hagiographic framework that implicitly marked her as an exception within the republican movement because of her gender.<sup>392</sup> Within the Irish Free State, Markievicz was continually redefined within cultural narratives of war; positioned as both a lingering threat to public stability and a symbolic figure of romantic, Irish femininity. Her photographic visibility had been used to delegitimise her participation, yet these images also offered her peers a way to counter delegitimising narratives of women's militancy in post-war Ireland.

During the establishment of the Francoist dictatorship in Spain, the photographic visibility of militant Republican women was similarly weaponised against them by the state. During the war, the Francoist press republished Republican press photographs of militiawomen to signify the corruption of traditional Spanish values. This strategy was reinforced in the aftermath of war, where photographs of militant women were not only used to consolidate the new Spanish state and legitimise the need for violent revolt in 1936, but were also used as evidence in tribunals to justify imprisonment and execution.<sup>393</sup> Like in Ireland, militant women were adopted into the visual culture of the Francoist dictatorship as a threat to the gendered order, which is particularly reflected in the photographs of women collected and published by the Causa General. The Ministry of Justice formed this initiative in April 1940 as a state mechanism to encourage denunciation of Republicans to the Francoist authorities under the guise of an investigative archive that collected evidence and compensated 'crimes committed during the Red Terror'.<sup>394</sup> The Causa General also gathered photographs and press clippings that documented Republican activity, and this material was

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<sup>392</sup> Arrington, pp. 272-3. Loredana Salis, 'The Duty and Pleasure of Memory: Constance Markievicz', *Studi Irlandesi: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 8 (2018), 431-53, pp. 434-5.

<sup>393</sup> Queralt Solé, 'Executed Women, Assassinated Women: Gender Repression in the Spanish Civil War and the Violence of the Rebels' in Ofelia Ferrán and Lisa Hilbrink, *Legacies of Violence in Contemporary Spain: Exhuming the Past, Understanding the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 69-93, (p. 74).

<sup>394</sup> For further research on the Causa General see: Isidro Sánchez, Manuel Ortiz and David Ruiz, *España Franquista: Causa General y Actitudes Sociales Ante la Dictadura* (Albacete: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1993), pp. 23-5; Ángela Cenarro, 'Matar, Vigilar y Delatar: la Quiebra de la Sociedad Civil durante la Guerra y la Posguerra en España (1936-1948)', *Historia Social*, 44 (2002), 65-86; Antonio Cazorla-Sánchez, 'Revisiting the Legacy of the Spanish Civil War', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 21.3 (2008), 231-46.

republished in 1943 as the photobook *Causa General: La Dominación Roja en España* (General Cause: The Red Domination in Spain).<sup>395</sup> These books were continuously republished throughout the regime in both Spanish and English to support the Francoist narrative of war and legitimise their repressive actions against Republicans.<sup>396</sup> These photobooks provided sensationalised accounts of Republican violence against civilians and clergy, featuring images shot by pro-Francoist photographers as well as photographs taken from the press archive of the propaganda department of the Second Republic, which had been confiscated by the Nationalist army after the invasion of Madrid in March 1939.

The photography of Republican photojournalists was thus remade into a ‘false witness’, with the context and intended meaning of images altered to substantiate the Francoist narrative of war.<sup>397</sup> Photographs of Republican bombing victims were captioned as Nationalist civilians, while images of war dead that had been used by the Republican press to facilitate the identification and reclamation of bodies were transformed into evidence of criminality and degeneracy.<sup>398</sup> Women’s visual representation in the *Causa General* reflected the dichotomous approach to femininity constructed during the dictatorship, with women photographed either as martyrs, victims of Republican terror, or as monstrous militants. The photograph in Figure 3.5, the origins of which are uncredited, appeared as part of a series on the crimes of the Republican militias. It depicted a mixed-gender Republican militia armed with rifles marching down a street, with some in uniform and one person lifting their fist in the anarchist salute in the background. As a press photograph most likely shot in July or August 1936, it initially served as a celebration of the bravery and dedication of the Republican militias, however, within the context of the *Causa General*, it took on a more sinister appearance. In the book, the photograph was captioned an ‘armed mob for the Popular Front patrolling the streets’ in order to illustrate the threatening atmosphere of the Republican-held zones. As seen in Ireland, the transgressive presence of women as active participants signified the illegitimacy of the Republican regime and those who upheld it, with the armed nature of the women in the photo drawing on stories published in the Nationalist press of militiawomen attacking and killing nuns, priests and civilians.

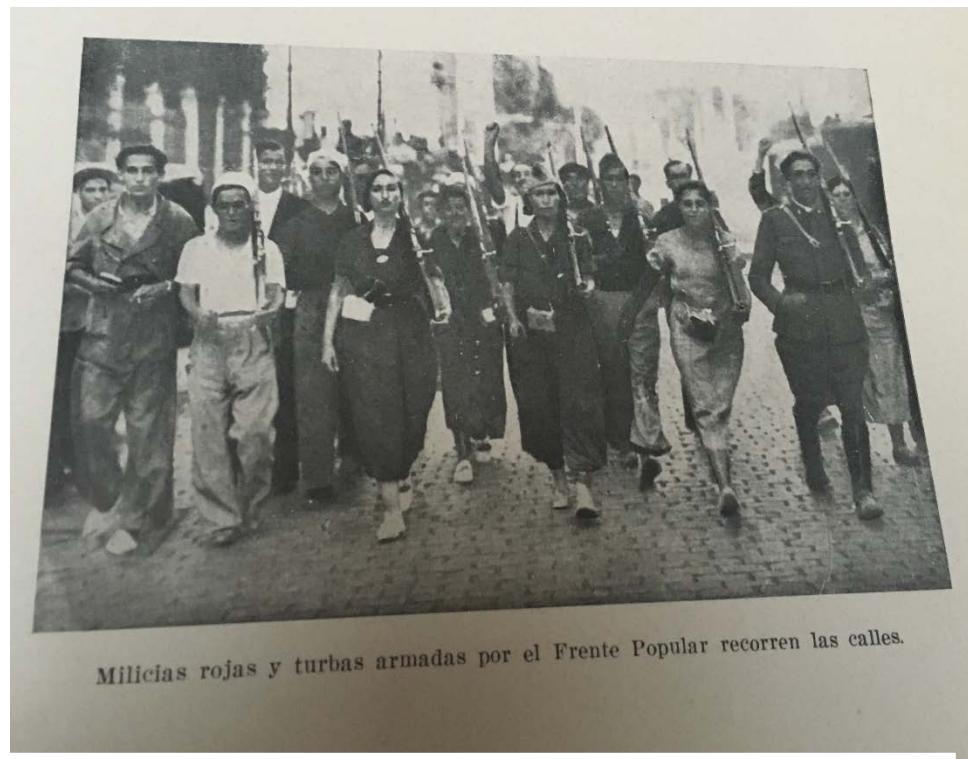
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<sup>395</sup> Henceforth *Causa General*. *Causa General: La Dominación Roja en España* (Madrid: Ministerio de Justicia, 1943). Subsequent editions and reprints were published in 1945, 1946 [in English], and 1961.

<sup>396</sup> Eduardo González Calleja, ‘Review: De Campos, Cárcel y Checas. Maneras de Ver la Represión durante la Guerra Civil y la Posguerra’, *Revista de Libros de la Fundación Caja Madrid*, 87 (2004), 6-8, p. 8.

<sup>397</sup> Faber, pp. 52-6

<sup>398</sup> Francisco Espinosa Maestre, ‘Agosto de 1936. Terror y Propaganda: los Orígenes de la *Causa General*, *Pasado y Memoria*, 4 (2005), 15-25.



**Figure 3.4**, 'Milicias rojas', in *Causa General*, 1943. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid.

The discourses surrounding Republican women within the *Causa General* positioned them as corrupted by foreign influence, bloodthirsty, and unfeminine. In the aftermath of war, this visual narrative would be used to justify the deliberate persecution and imprisonment of Republican women.<sup>399</sup>

As this section demonstrates, militant women were not invisible in the aftermath of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War, even as they remained embedded within overarching processes of erasure. Rather, in a continuation of the redefinition of photographs of militant women during war, images of militant women were circulated as a means to construct complex and contradictory ideologies of femininity within the new state. The post-war governments of Ireland and Spain republished war photography to delegitimise women's participation and frame them as threats to the national order, and the Catholic ideologies embedded within the new nation. Women's photographic visibility was therefore used to disempower them. The narratives imposed upon these photographs within the post-conflict period demonstrate the need to consider the context in which photographs of militant women circulate. Yet, it is also critical to understand how militant women contested these narratives. Throughout the post-conflict period, Irish and Spanish militant women used their own photographic practices to challenge the narratives imposed upon them by the Irish Free State

<sup>399</sup> Lorraine Ryan, 'Sins of the Father', pp. 248-9.

and Francoist dictatorship. Women used photography to build pockets of visibility within their private networks, clandestine political groups and the radical press, where they both challenged the delegitimisation of their participation and attested to their presence within male-dominated narratives of war. In the next section, I will focus on how militant women in Ireland used photography within the radical press to construct their own narratives of women's militancy, and condemn attempts by the Irish Free State to take ownership over the legacies of nationalist women.

### 3.2 ‘The Same Unflinching Service’: Negotiating Irish Women’s Militancy in *An Phoblacht* (1925-1936)

In the face of the state’s sustained attempts to erase and delegitimise their participation, Irish militant women relentlessly documented their presence.<sup>400</sup> They took photographs of themselves training and parading, they submitted letters to editors that challenged the mainstream press’s attempts to undermine their participation, they wrote their own counter-histories of the revolution within the clandestine, republican press, and they pasted these traces of defiance together in photograph albums, autograph books, and scrapbooks. As I discussed in relation to Sighle Humphrey’s scrapbook, scrapbooking allowed women to preserve their own histories of rebellion, and it was a space where they could remake and re-contextualise text and photographs to create alternative narratives of war and revolution.<sup>401</sup> These scrapbooks are examples of how militant women created pockets of visibility that allowed them to construct subversive counter-memories of war, which they then shared and circulated amongst and within private networks of militant and activist women. Central to the counter-narratives of war within these scrapbooks were women’s articles and photographs from the Irish radical, republican press. From the mid nineteenth-century, Irish nationalist women had used the radical press as a space to protest and agitate, and the continuation of this practice in the post-war period highlighted how women used the radical press as a space to challenge their erasure from public narratives of nationalism.<sup>402</sup> However, while the radical press offered women a space to attest to their active participation within war, they had to negotiate this presence within the gendered dynamics of Irish nationalism, which

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<sup>400</sup> Pašeta, *Irish Nationalist Women*, p. 1.

<sup>401</sup> Susan Tucker and Svanhildur Bogadóttir, ‘Gender, Memory, and History: In One Culture and Across Others’, *Journal of Archival Organization*, 6.4 (2008), 288-310.

<sup>402</sup> Karen Steele has argued that the radical press was significant in the formation of a nationalist community in the nineteenth century, and her work has demonstrated the centrality of women within these spaces. Karen Steele, *Women, Press and Politics during the Irish Revival* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), pp. 9-10.

had retreated to a gendered framework of soldierly masculinity and domestic femininity after the civil war.

Writing in 1941, Eithne Coyle, President of Cumann na mBan, argued that 'it would be a crime against history if the often brave, and often hidden actions of the women's sections were not recorded for posterity'.<sup>403</sup> To document Irish women's militancy, Coyle wrote numerous articles and letters to the editor in the radical and public press, gave public lectures on women's participation in war, and interviewed women in Cumann na mBan to collect and preserve their experiences.<sup>404</sup> In addition to this, Coyle, like many women across Ireland, kept a scrapbook of photographs, memorabilia and news clippings from the mainstream and radical press that documented and preserved her militant activism; a way of articulating her militant identity shaped by how others saw and wrote about her.<sup>405</sup> Coyle's scrapbook, donated to the University College Dublin Archive in the 1980s by her children, built a narrative of continuous defiance out of legal documents, reports on her arrests, and her own writings on gender and nationalism. It also acted as a memorial to women's collective militancy during the revolutionary and post-conflict periods, with later pages dedicated to a collection of obituaries and Mass cards that commemorated Irish militant women. These obituaries, taken from both the mainstream press and radical publications, shed light on the complexity of how militant women were framed in the aftermath of the Irish Civil War. Within obituaries, women have often been rendered 'storyless'; an afterword in a masculine narrative characterised solely as a wife, mother or daughter.<sup>406</sup> In Ireland, de Valera's Fianna Fáil and the *Irish Press*, the official press organ of the party, used the obituaries of some Cumann na mBan women to legitimise the republican movement by resituating these women into the gendered ideologies of Irish nationalism and Catholic femininity, in spite of their opposition to such structures.<sup>407</sup> Deceased militant women were 'contained within the myths, symbols and stories of the good old days when the national struggle was fought and won', while women active in contemporary dissident movements were 'vilified...precisely because

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<sup>403</sup> Morrison, p. 63.

<sup>404</sup> UCDA, P61/4. In 1969, Coyle sent out a series of questionnaires to Cumann na mBan women in order to record their experiences, with the aim of eventually compiling them into a book, which did not happen in the end.

<sup>405</sup> Ellen Gruber Garvey, 'Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson's Suffrage Work: The View from Her Scrapbook', *Legacy*, 33.2 (2016), 310-35, p. 311.

<sup>406</sup> Wendy Webster, 'Representing Nation: Women, Obituaries and National Biography', in *Re-presenting the Past: Women and History*, ed. by Ann-Marie Gallagher, Cathy Lubelska and Louise Ryan (London: Pearson, 2001), pp. 124-41, (p. 125).

<sup>407</sup> Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and Irish Press*, pp. 249-50. For more on the establishment of Fianna Fáil and republican women's reaction see: Matthews, pp. 182-5. For more on *Irish Press* see: Catherine Curran, 'Fianna Fáil and the Origins of *The Irish Press*', *Irish Communications Review*, 6 (1996), 7-17.

they argued that the national struggle had not been won'.<sup>408</sup> Yet, the ways in which militant women both engaged with these obituaries and wrote their own responses in the radical press, where they had more editorial control, reveal how they contested this post-mortem redefinition into a traditional gendered order.



Figure 3.5, Eithne Coyle, Collage of Obituaries for Nora O'Shea, Dublin, UCD Archives, Eithne Coyle-O'Donnell Personal Papers, 61/28.

In her scrapbook, Coyle dedicated numerous pages to her comrades in Cumann na mBan. In particular, a three-page spread with seven obituaries from different sources, including one written by Coyle herself, commemorated her close friend Nora O'Shea. Nora O'Shea joined Cumann na mBan in 1918, two years after Coyle.<sup>409</sup> Both women actively participated in the War of Independence and Civil War, and both were arrested during the Civil War, with Coyle imprisoned in the North Dublin Union from 26<sup>th</sup> September 1922 to 7<sup>th</sup> November 1923 and O'Shea imprisoned from 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1922 to 29<sup>th</sup> October 1923.<sup>410</sup>

<sup>408</sup> Louise Ryan, *Gender Identity and Irish Press*, pp. 250-1.

<sup>409</sup> Her birth date is unknown but she died on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1935.

<sup>410</sup> Ann Matthews, *Dissidents, Irish Republican Women 1921-1943* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2012), p. 263 and p. 282.

They continued to be active in the republican movement after the war; Coyle was elected as president of Cumann na mBan in 1926, and O’Shea joined the executive council in 1931 and remained on it until her death in 1935. They steered the organisation through the tumultuous post-war period, guiding it through periods of illegality, political in-fighting, and the evolution of its political identity as it merged Catholic social teaching with James Connolly’s socialism.<sup>411</sup>

Nora O’Shea died in February 1935 at the age of 39, and she was given a military style funeral by her republican comrades, with an IRA band, a guard of honour by the executive members of Cumann na mBan, and a tricolour flag draped over her coffin. Eithne Coyle gave the eulogy at her funeral, speaking of her bravery and her participation in the revolutionary movement, and praising her for her dedication by saying that ‘wherever there was dangerous or difficult work to be done, she was always to be found ready to take any risk’.<sup>412</sup> In the weeks after the funeral, Coyle pasted together multiple obituaries alongside a photograph of O’Shea in her scrapbook, as shown in Figure 3.5. Through her private engagement with these objects, Coyle crafted a narrative of O’Shea’s militancy that recorded the scope of her activism both during and after the war. The news clippings surrounded a photographic portrait of O’Shea, with a handwritten note on the image giving her name and date of death.<sup>413</sup> The photograph pasted onto the scrapbook page was small and grainy, yet even on the microfilm it was evident that it had been well used before it had been pasted into the album, with signs of wear and touch present on the edges of the image. It is reminiscent of the revolutionary portraits discussed in Chapter 2, as O’Shea stands confidently in her Cumann na mBan uniform, with a wry smile on her face. While there is no indication of where and when the photograph was produced, it can be assumed that O’Shea commissioned this image to provide a sense of recognition and validation that had been denied to Irish women after the war is clear.<sup>414</sup>

The validation that O’Shea sought through her photographic practices, however, continued to be denied to her within the obituaries dedicated to her after her death. Obituaries published by mainstream newspapers such as the *Irish Press* and the *Irish Independent* defined

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<sup>411</sup> During the 1930s, the Irish republican movement became ideologically fragmented, and Cumann na mBan called for ‘a Republic based on the Encyclical of Pope Leo X111... and the teachings of James Connolly’. Eithne Coyle quoted in Matthews, p. 231. For more on Irish republican politics in the 1930s see: Richard English, *Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State, 1925-1937* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Elizabeth Kyte, ‘Sighle Humphreys: a Case Study in Irish Socialist Feminism, 1920s-1930s, *Saothar*, 36 (2011), 27-36.

<sup>412</sup> Unknown, ‘Late Nora O’Shea: Tribute at Graveside’, *An Phoblacht*, 24 February 1935.

<sup>413</sup> It is unclear whether this was written by Coyle herself or by an archivist.

<sup>414</sup> Preston, p. 797. For more on portraiture as a marker of identity, see: Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity* (Oxon: Routledge, 1998), pp. 41-76; Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*.

O’Shea within narrow narratives of gendered nationalism. In particular, the obituaries from the *Irish Press* and the republican periodical *An Phoblacht* clearly illustrate, firstly, how women’s militancy was redefined to fit within state revolutionary narratives, and secondly, how the radical press offered women a place to contest this process. The *Irish Press* (1931-1995), edited by Eamon de Valera who had notoriously refused to allow Cumann na mBan members entry to his garrison during the Easter Rising, reinforced a gendered, Catholicised narrative of nationalism. The *Irish Press* adopted the gendered revolutionary mythos constructed by the Irish Free State into its own narrative of the revolution, which framed Fianna Fáil as the rightful inheritors of the Irish republican legacy. Kenneth Shonk has discussed how the *Irish Press* promoted an ideal of republican femininity that codified women’s domestic role within society and ‘repositioned feminine political agency’ away from protest and militant activism.<sup>415</sup> Women were thus framed both as vanguards of tradition and morality and as a threat to the moral order, paralleling the contradictory approach to femininity seen within the Spanish post-war press.<sup>416</sup>

Nora O’Shea’s obituary in the *Irish Press* reflected this recategorisation of women’s militancy. In the article ‘Three Names’, published by an unknown author on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1935, O’Shea is discussed alongside Patrick Flanagan and Fr. John Nicholson in a collective obituary designed to ‘remind us of the debt our nation owes to a brave generation’.<sup>417</sup> The obituary, seen in Figure 3.5, reflected the idealised gendered dynamics of nationalism. Flanagan and Nicholson were described as combatants, whereas O’Shea was framed in a subordinate role as one of the ‘helpers who made effective so much of the I.R.A activity’.<sup>418</sup> While O’Shea was recognised in the mainstream press, it was a selective commemoration which only recorded the acceptably feminine aspects of her participation. Her militancy was spoken of in vague terms, as her active participation in combat support, espionage, and arms smuggling would have undermined the gendered boundaries of nationalism that the *Irish Press* sought to maintain. O’Shea thus served as a symbolic vessel for nationalist womanhood, with the obituary arguing that its female readers should emulate the feminine modesty and virtue ascribed to O’Shea rather than the direct, militant actions of her and her compatriots, who were condemned and mocked in the same pages of the newspaper. The obituary stated that ‘in

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<sup>415</sup> Kenneth Shonk, ‘Fashion’s Latest Whims Need Not Alarm Us?’: Femininity and Consumption in the Irish Press, 1931-37’, *New Hibernia Review*, 19.3 (2015), 35-50.

<sup>416</sup> Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, p. 5. For more on the *Irish Press*, see John Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History Since 1922* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 28-37.

<sup>417</sup> ‘Three Names’, *Irish Press*, 12 February 1935.

<sup>418</sup> ‘Three Names’, *Irish Press*, 12 February 1935.

her person, we can visualise what the womenfolk of Ireland did to wrest their nation free', ultimately redefining O'Shea as an idealised symbol of Catholic, nationalist womanhood.



Figure 3.6, 'Passing of Loyal Worker', *An Phoblacht*, 16 February 1935.  
National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

Within her scrapbook, Coyle complicated this reading by pasting the obituary next to the overtly militant photograph of O'Shea, seen in Figure 3.6, providing another means of visualising women's role in the revolution. This photograph of O'Shea was taken from an article written by Coyle published on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 1935 in *An Phoblacht*. *An Phoblacht* (1925-1936) was the official organ of the IRA, and Cumann na mBan regularly collaborated with the paper to publish women's articles, transcripts of speeches, advertisements for membership and propaganda after their own newspaper had ceased publication.<sup>419</sup> After the IRA and Cumann na mBan were declared unlawful in 1931, *An Phoblacht* became the primary means of contesting the exclusionary war narrative constructed by the Irish Free State, and it was frequently seized and censored by the Free State government.<sup>420</sup> While the *Irish Press*

<sup>419</sup> Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, "The Mosquito Press": Anti-Imperialist Rhetoric in Republican Journalism, 1926-39, *Éire-Ireland*, 42.1 (2007), 256-89, p. 259.

<sup>420</sup> Bill Kissane, 'Defending Democracy? The Legislative Response to Political Extremism in the Irish Free State, 1922-39', *Irish Historical Studies*, 34.134 (2004), 156-74, p. 161. Cumann na nGaelheal was the ruling political party

erased transgressive aspects of O’Shea’s militancy, *An Phoblacht* challenged this by describing her as ‘one of the most prominent and active members of Cumann na mBan...given many important and dangerous undertaking to carry out both for her own organisation and the Irish Republican Army’.<sup>421</sup> In writing this obituary, Eithne Coyle emphasised her active participation as she described O’Shea as ‘taking a man’s part in the war for independence’. In the article, Coyle highlights the diverse nature of this active participation, referencing how O’Shea smuggled arms and ammunition, transported men to safe houses and provided first aid, and continued her militancy after the civil war where she broke men out of prison and raised funds for republican organisations through the Easter Lily campaign.<sup>422</sup> In explicitly detailing O’Shea’s revolutionary militancy, and how this continued in the dissident republican movement, Eithne Coyle used *An Phoblacht* to construct an alternative way of looking at women’s militancy that challenged the patriarchal structures of the mainstream revolutionary narrative.

Yet, the *An Phoblacht* obituary also operated within a republican gendered order that restricted and denied recognition to militant women.<sup>423</sup> While women were regular contributors to the newspaper, their articles often reinforced the gendered dynamics of republican nationalism, with women using their status as mothers or relatives of martyred male republicans to legitimise their presence within the movement.<sup>424</sup> Within articles written by men, nationalist women were presented as passive victims of the Irish Free State. Imprisoned women in particular were frequently visualised within this framework, with articles using the imprisonment of militant women as a way to attack the government. Conversely, violent campaigns organised by Cumann na mBan were given less recognition in *An Phoblacht* than feminine-coded activities such as fundraising or campaigning for prisoners welfare. Outside of this gendered discourse, women’s revolutionary participation was included in the revolutionary narrative only when they were redefined within narratives of exceptionalism.

The *An Phoblacht* obituary deliberately framed O’Shea within a rhetoric of martyrdom, a device that, as I explored in Chapter 2 in relation to the Spanish militiawoman Lina Odena,

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in the Irish Free State from 1923-1932. Senia Pašeta, ‘Censorship and its Critics in the Irish Free State, 1922-1932’, *Past and Present*, 181 (2003), 193-218.

<sup>421</sup> ‘Passing of a Loyal Worker’, *An Phoblacht*, 16 February 1935.

<sup>422</sup> For more on the Easter Lily campaign see: Matthews, pp. 190-207.

<sup>423</sup> Coen, pp. 22-5.

<sup>424</sup> For example, reports by Maud Gonne on the Women Prisoners Defence League, popularly called ‘The Mothers’ used their status as the ‘mothers, wives and sisters of imprisoned republicans’ to protest against the Irish Free State (Maud Gonne, ‘Must We Fight Again for Ireland’s Honour, *An Phoblacht*, 9/12/1933). Ward, *In Their Own Voice*, pp. 148-53.

allowed women to transcend normative gendered conventions through their death. Within the radical press, fewer photographs were published compared to the mainstream press, but O’Shea’s youthful image in her photograph in Figure 3.6 was used to construct her as a tragic figure. Once again, the need to question the patriarchal conditions of women’s visibility is made apparent: in life, O’Shea’s photograph was circulated within private networks of family and friends, yet in death it took on a new significance and was seen by a wider audience. In an attack against the Irish Free State, the obituary described how the over-crowded conditions of the prison drove women, including O’Shea, to protest and sleep outside in the cold and rain, which caused O’Shea to fall ill. This illness is said to have led to her ‘untimely death’, and thus O’Shea’s death became a tool to target the government, presenting her as another victim within the narrative of war and a cause to be rallied around. Even within the radical press, women had to negotiate their position within the resistance movement and the revolutionary war narrative through complex gendered dynamics, with overt and transgressive militancy permissible and celebrated only within death.

The *Irish Press* obituary of O’Shea lamented that ‘only when they die, and not even always then, does their [women’s] heroism come to knowledge of the country in whose defence they so bravely served’—yet, women did speak of their heroism, their participation in the revolution, and furthermore they demanded a place within the revolutionary narrative that was actively denied to them. Their defiance against state processes of erasure can be seen in the fabric of Coyle’s scrapbook itself, as a photographic practice that actively created a counter-narrative of the past. I argue that Coyle’s album is an example of material feminist resistance, which Marianne Hirsch describes as a means of regaining agency by rereading images and using them to intervene against the ideological scripts of femininity.<sup>425</sup> By bringing together multiple obituaries dedicated to O’Shea and arranging them around the photograph that O’Shea commissioned to legitimise her militant identity and commitment to the revolutionary cause, Coyle constructed an alternative revolutionary narrative that reflected the complex and contradictory nature of how women’s militancy was adopted into public narratives of the revolution. Coyle’s scrapbook thus served as a defiant pocket of visibility within a male-dominated revolutionary narrative, which contested the silencing of women’s voices and their redefinition as symbols. For Spanish militant women, the radical press of the anti-Francoist movement likewise offered a space to recognise and assert women’s role in both the civil war and resistance organisations.

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<sup>425</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 214-5.

### 3.3 ‘Yesterday’s Militiawoman’: Redefining Women’s Militancy in Exile through *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* (1946-1950)

In the aftermath of war, the Francoist dictatorship built a public narrative of conflict that left ‘no room for preserving the memories of the vanquished’.<sup>426</sup> Within the Francoist narrative of the war, Republican women were silenced, shamed, and systemically punished for their support, or supposed support, of the Second Republic.<sup>427</sup> In Spain, Republican women’s memories of the civil war were confined to private and clandestine spaces, told only in hidden photograph albums, whispered stories, and prison graffiti, however, those who had fled to countries such as France and Mexico were able to speak out about their experiences publicly. For militant women, exile was a space to mobilise and continue their resistance against the Francoist regime, a site where they could ‘conserve a political tradition and a field of action within the public sphere which in Spain had been irredeemably lost’.<sup>428</sup> In particular, the radical press in exile was a critical space for women to challenge how their experiences had been redefined and erased in Francoist cultural discourses, and a way to attest to their presence and participation within male-dominated resistance organisations.

In this section, I examine how Communist women in exile in France used the radical magazine *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* (1946-1950) to agitate against the Francoist dictatorship, thus maintaining the Republican tradition of women’s political activism. Within this magazine, women mobilised photography to construct a visual legacy of women’s militancy and assert their role within the anti-Francoist resistance. In doing so, they both legitimised their continuing participation in these resistance organisations, and contested their erasure within male-dominated Communist publications, which, like the Irish republican movement, re-established a strict gendered order of participation after the war. However, as we will shortly see, despite their efforts to contest erasure, however, militant women’s photographic practices in this magazine broadly aligned with the patriarchal paradigms of the resistance movement, and their collective experiences of militancy were marginalised by narratives of exceptional icons.

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<sup>426</sup> Ángela Cenarro, ‘Memory Beyond the Public Sphere: The Francoist Repression Remembered in Aragón’, *History and Memory*, 14.1-2, (2002), 165-88, p. 167.

<sup>427</sup> Richards, *A Time of Silence*, pp. 52-6.

<sup>428</sup> Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, ‘The Mobilization of Women in Exile: The Case of the Unión de Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas in France (1944-1950), *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 6.1 (2005), 43-58, p. 43. However, while women used exile as a site of resistance, their presence within narratives of resistance organisations is limited due to the patriarchal conceptions of resistance engrained within this organisations.

Communist women's resistance organisations in exile originated from the *Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas* (AMA). AMA was founded in 1933 in Spain with the aim of collectively mobilising Communist, Socialist and Republican women under Communist ideology and leadership.<sup>429</sup> In exile, this group was reformed as the women's section of the *Unión Nacional de España* (UNE), which had been launched by the PCE in 1941 to organise Spanish exiles under a single, Communist organisation, as well as encourage their participation in the French Resistance.<sup>430</sup> The group also participated directly in the resistance against Franco and aided clandestine groups in Spain through offering auxiliary support to guerrilla groups, disseminating propaganda by the *Radio España Independiente*, and providing funds and aid.<sup>431</sup> The women's section later split from the UNE and renamed itself the *Unión de Mujeres Españolas* (UME). Under the editorial control of activists Irene Falcón, Eliza Uriz, and Rosa Vila, the UME founded the magazine *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* in October 1946. It aimed to politically mobilise women, inform them about women's activism both in Spain and in France, denounce the repression of Republican women under Franco, and form a transnational network of resistance between women's clandestine organisations in Spain and militant women's groups in exile. In addition to being a political vehicle for UME, *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* also gained popularity as a women's magazine, melding articles on international communism and women's prisons in Spain with articles on fashion and advertisements for cosmetics.<sup>432</sup> As Caitríona Beaumont has discussed, women's magazines harbour 'diversity, inconsistency, contradiction and tension', producing a complex and at times contradictory view on femininity.<sup>433</sup> Examining militant women's photographic practices and engagement within *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* reveals how the editors constructed a complex narrative of women's militancy during and after war, where militant women negotiated between the iconic symbols of the revolutionary past and the patriarchal dynamics of the anti-Francoist resistance movement. Like the women of Cumann na mBan who wrote in *An Phoblacht*, Spanish militant women had to negotiate their militancy

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<sup>429</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, 'The Mobilization of Women in Exile', pp. 45-6.

<sup>430</sup> For more on resistance organisations in exile see: Scott Soo, *The Routes to Exile: France and the Spanish Civil War Refugees, 1939-2009* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp. 193-219.

<sup>431</sup> Balsebre Torroja and Fontova, p. 85.

<sup>432</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, 'La Revista *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*', p. 125.

<sup>433</sup> Caitríona Beaumont, 'Housewives and Citizens: Encouraging Active Citizenship in the Print Media of the Housewives Associations during the Interwar Years', in *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain: The Interwar Period*, ed. by Catherine Clay et al (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), pp. 408-20, (p. 411).

within the gendered dynamics of the clandestine resistance—a movement that frequently omitted women's contributions and enforced a patriarchal division of labour.<sup>434</sup>

Through exiled women's photographic practices, they constructed an alternative gaze on women's militancy. Photography was integral to the identity of *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, and the magazine published a wide range of images that included professional photojournalism to republished war photography, to clandestine photographs of Francoist prisons, to amateur photographs of protests and individual activists. While these images were rarely credited, making it difficult to trace their origin, the melding of professional and vernacular photographs reveals how women's photographic practices and the transnational resistance networks that they built shaped the visual dynamics of the magazine. *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* challenged the dominant representations of Communist women in the political press, which visualised women as either housewives or unmarried workers and minimised their participation in comparison to their male counterparts.<sup>435</sup> In the first two years of its production, the magazine focused almost exclusively on anti-Francoist activism in Spain and in exile, and its photographic content reflected this with photographs of imprisoned women and children used to denounce the mistreatment of prisoners, vernacular portraits of activists from all levels of the organisation, and reproductions of iconic war photographs. Through this photographic engagement, women asserted their active role within the resistance movement and constructed a visual legacy of women's militancy that legitimised their participation.<sup>436</sup> In later years, the magazine engaged in a more internationalist perspective, and its coverage on Spanish women's militancy aligned more closely with Communist gendered ideologies through framing women as icons, victims, or heroic mothers.<sup>437</sup>

In both Ireland and Spain, militant women have drawn on iconographic women as a precedent for their activism: in the periodical *Irish Citizen* (1912-1920), Constance Markievicz and Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington drew on Irish mythology to justify their active militancy on behalf of nationalism and suffrage, arguing that 'ancient Ireland bred warrior women, and women played a heroic part in those days'.<sup>438</sup> During the Spanish Civil War, Republican

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<sup>434</sup> Cristina Somolinos, “‘Las Mujeres Hacemos Fuerza, aunque los Hombres Quieran Negarlo’: Culturas Domésticas e Identidades Disidentes en la Narrativa Social de Dolores Medio”, *Kamchatka*, 14 (2019), 223-44.

<sup>435</sup> Pilar Domínguez Prats, ‘La Representación Fotográfica de las Exiliadas Españolas en México’, *Migraciones e Exilios: Cuadernos de la Asociación para el estudio de los Exilios y Migraciones Ibéricos Contemporáneos*, 4 (2003), 51-63.

<sup>436</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, ‘Hombres Armados’, p. 286.

<sup>437</sup> Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, ‘Mujeres de Acero: Las Comunistas Españolas y la Federación Democrática Internacional de Mujeres (1945-1950)’, *Hispania Nova: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 18 (2020), 599-629, p. 620.

<sup>438</sup> Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, p. 219.

women invoked women such as Agustina de Aragón, who fought on the frontlines of Zaragoza during the Spanish War of Independence (1807-1818), and female martyrs of the war, such as Lina Odena, to create a continuous legacy of women's participation that was distributed throughout the press and propaganda campaigns.<sup>439</sup> The editors of *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* continued this practice in the pages of their magazine firstly to justify and legitimise their own activism during the war and in exile, and secondly to construct a collective, political identity for women that would drive them to engage in the anti-Francoist resistance.<sup>440</sup> Yet, this focus on exceptional narratives of militancy reflected the difficulties of integrating women's militancy into wider narratives of resistance and war. Like with *An Phoblacht*'s obituary of Nora O'Shea, women's active militancy was recognised and valued only when it took on a wider, symbolic meaning within the patriarchal narrative of war. These visual legacies of women's militancy honoured select icons, but they did not acknowledge the collective experiences of militant women, the diverse scope of their participation, or the role that the Republican state played in removing them from the front and restricting their participation during war. The visibility of iconic figures such as Lina Odena was constructed through the erasure of ordinary women's militancy, thus demonstrating how photographic visibility within mainstream narratives is entangled with the wider processes of erasure.

This construction of a photographic legacy of women's militancy in *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* was particularly evident in the July 1947 issue, which commemorated the eleventh anniversary of the outbreak of civil war. The editors of the magazine republished war photographs of the militiawomen Lina Odena and Francisca Solano, who had become icons within Republican visual culture after their deaths at the front. The tone of these articles used these martyred women to mobilise readers, building on previous uses of these photographs within the Republican wartime press.<sup>441</sup> The cover of the issue, shown in Figure 3.7, featured a close-up shot of Odena, reproduced from the PCE commemorative postcard seen in Chapter 2. On the cover, the photograph of Odena was edited to make her features clearer and to brighten her skin in order to provide a stronger contrast against the background. This gave the

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<sup>439</sup> Agustina de Aragón was also used within Francoist ideologies, and reflect the complexity of seeing women during war. This is discussed in Jessamy Harvey, 'Domestic Queens and Warrior Wives: Imperial Role-Models for Spanish Schoolgirls during the Early Francoist Regime (1940s-1950s)', *History of Education*, 37.2 (2008), 277-93, p. 290.

<sup>440</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, 'La Construcción de una Cultura Política Femenina desde el Antifascismo (1934-1950)' in *Feminismos y Antifeminismos: Culturas Políticas e Identidades de Género en la España del siglo XX*, ed. by Ana Aguado and Teresa María Ortega López (Valencia: Servei de Publicacions, 2011), pp. 253-82, (p. 279).

<sup>441</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, 'The Mobilization of Women in Exile', p. 43.

photograph a more illustrative quality that distinguished it from the vernacular photographs of militant women that circulated in *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*.



**Figure 3.7**, 'Mas Vale Morir en Pie que Vivir de Rodillas: Lina Odéa', *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, July 1947. Courtesy of Biblioteca Virtual de la Prensa Histórica, Madrid.

The photograph was overlaid with a quote from the president of UME, Dolores Ibárruri, arguing that it was 'better to die on your feet than live on your knees'.<sup>442</sup> Ibárruri, also known as Pasionaria, was a leading Communist politician famed for her inspiring speeches and propaganda, becoming known as 'the ultimate spokesperson for the Spanish Republic'

<sup>442</sup> Ibárruri was the president of Unión de Mujeres Españolas and a key figure in the Spanish Communist movement. Although not directly involved with the magazine, photographs and transcripts of her speeches were widely published and reported on throughout the magazine's tenure.

and a cultural icon across Europe.<sup>443</sup> This quote was taken from a speech that Ibárruri had previously given to male Republican troops during war, a counterpoint to her speech directed at women that it was ‘preferable to be the widow of a hero than the wife of a coward’.<sup>444</sup> Yet, in framing this quote in the context of women’s militancy and empowerment, the editors of *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* redefined this quote as a call to action towards their female readership. In doing so, they challenged the gendered dynamics of the resistance movement, countering mainstream Communist ideologies that centred on women’s domestic roles and the ideal of ‘fierce, Communist motherhood’.<sup>445</sup>

*Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* constructed a distinctive rhetoric of resistance that transmitted a narrative of women’s militancy that legitimised women’s active participation within the anti-Francoist movement. Yet, even within this rhetoric of women’s political agency and action, the photographic practices surrounding women’s militancy reflected wider, patriarchal conditions of visibility. In post-conflict Spanish visual culture, militiawomen were permissible as symbols within the iconography of war, but women were directed to emulate the values they embodied, rather than follow their gender-transgressive participation. As a poem published by María López de Kent in the June 1948 issue of the magazine stated ‘yesterday’s militiawoman is now she who brings together the guerrillas’, or in other words, militant women had given up their guns to instead work in the rearguard of the resistance movement and contributing to the fight in ways that conformed to the gendered ideology of Communism—a rhetoric reminiscent of how Republican women had been withdrawn from the front in 1937.<sup>446</sup> Iconic images of militiawomen were inscribed into the visual narrative of war, but the collective experiences of Spanish militant women continued to be overshadowed as they were reframed within predominantly domestic parameters.

These complex dynamics of visibility and erasure, and the way these interacted with domestic narratives of women’s militancy, also informed Ibárruri’s commemorative article ‘We Will Return’ (July 1947).<sup>447</sup> The article was illustrated with four photos that demonstrated how women transgressed gendered boundaries during the war; showing women as politicians, taking on masculine-coded jobs in the rearguard, and as armed militiawomen. This article used

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<sup>443</sup> Mary Ann Dellinger, ‘Dolores Ibárruri, *Pasionaria*, Voice of the Anti-Franco Movement’, in *Female Exiles in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Europe*, ed. by Maureen Tobin Stanley and Gesa Zinn, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 33-50, (p. 33).

<sup>444</sup> Dellinger, p. 31.

<sup>445</sup> Lisa Kirschenbaum, ‘Exile, Gender and Communist Self-Fashioning: Dolores Ibárruri (*La Pasionaria*) in the Soviet Union’, *Slavic Review*, 17.3 (2012), 566-89, p. 574.

<sup>446</sup> María López de Kent, ‘A La Guerrillera Española’, *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, June 1948, p. 10.

<sup>447</sup> Dolores Ibárruri, ‘Volveremos’, *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, July 1947, p. 3.

the photographic iconography of militant women to bridge women's activism during war and their clandestine participation in the anti-Francoist movement, constructing a feminine counter-narrative of war and resistance. However, she positioned this narrative of continuous militancy within the patriarchal dynamics of the Communist movement in exile, ultimately condensing the wide scope of women's militancy into a predominantly domestic framework, interpolated with singular female icons such as Odena, which reinforced a gendered perspective on the civil war. The model of heroic motherhood dominated discussion of women's heroism, with women described as bringing their sons and husbands to enlist while they remained at home and on the rearguard. This reflected the wider gendered discourse within Spanish Communism, which argued that women's priorities lay in the domestic sphere, and that their family and home life took precedence over their roles in the resistance.<sup>448</sup> Yet, while the text foregrounded an exclusionary history of women's militancy, the accompanying photographs conveyed a different narrative that reflected the diversity of Republican women's militancy.

Figure 3.8 depicts two photographs of militiawomen, cropped and republished from wartime press photographs, which illustrated Ibárruri's article. While the larger image of the Communist militant Francisca Solano is captioned with her name and cause of death, the smaller photograph of the armed militiawoman is conspicuously anonymous, and she was detached entirely from the wider context of her original photograph in a manner similar to the propaganda photographs examined in the previous chapter. Although this anonymous militiawoman was physically visible within the magazine's narrative of the war, she was present only as an iconic symbol. As Fionna Barber has discussed in relation to the Irish Revolution, depictions of singular, exceptional heroines are sustained by the invisibility of the women around them, and these same dynamics are present within *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*' counter-narrative of war.<sup>449</sup>

The photographic practices and circulation surrounding Solano's photograph in particular highlights how the collective experiences of women were erased in favour of individual acts of heroism. Foto Almazán originally shot this photograph for the Republican photo-magazine *Estampa*, where it was published alongside a studio portrait of Solano on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1936 as part of Solano's obituary.<sup>450</sup> As Figure 3.9 shows, Solano was photographed alongside the other members of her militia.

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<sup>448</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, 'Rebeldía Individual', p. 71.

<sup>449</sup> Fionna Barber, 'Constructing Constance (and Some Other Women)', in *Beyond the Pale: The Art of the Revolution*, ed. by Anthony Haughey, Pat Cooke and Aoife Ruane (Drogheda, Highlanes Gallery, 2016), pp. 2-19, (p. 2).

<sup>450</sup> Olivera Zaldua, p. 102.



Figure 3.8, 'Volveremos', *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, July 1947. Courtesy of Biblioteca Virtual de la Prensa Histórica, Madrid.

She was centred in the image, standing tall and proud with her rifle upright in front of her, an aspect of the original photograph cropped out of Figure 3.8. In the far corners of the image, the presence of two other women can be partially seen on the edges of the battalion. It is unclear whether they were cropped out of the image by the photographic editor of *Estampa* or if their exclusion was present in the original image. On the left, a woman in a patterned dress stared forward in a formal pose that matched Solano, indicating that she too held a rifle, while on the right, a woman's face peered into the frame. The accompanying article, written by Eduardo de Ontañón, detailed Solano's enlistment in the militia and her death in action, as told to him by Carmen Robles, another militiawoman in the column. The reproduction of this photograph in *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* erased the presence of these women and Solano was instead transposed into a symbolic, singular martyr figure. The editing of this image

highlighted the tensions in constructing a counter-narrative of war within the gendered dynamics of the resistance movement. As seen with the coverage of O'Shea in *An Phoblacht*, the transgressive actions of militant women were adapted into a legacy of heroic martyrdom, yet the legitimisation of their participation came at the cost of excluding those who had fought alongside them from the public narrative of war.<sup>451</sup>



**Figure 3.9**, Foto Almazán, 'Francisca Solano, heroína de las milicias', *Estampa*, 8 August 1936. Courtesy of Biblioteca Virtual de la Prensa Histórica, Madrid.

Nevertheless, while *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* use of war photography replicated gendered power dynamics, their photographic practices surrounding contemporary activism deliberately challenged the patriarchal erasure of women's militancy in exile. Amongst iconic war photographs, they also republished clandestine booklets and photographs produced by militant women in Spain, documenting the frequently erased participation of Spanish women

<sup>451</sup> Linhard, 'The Death Story of the "Trece Rosas", pp. 194-5.

'in the ballot boxes, in the trenches, in the prisons, in the guerrillas and in the strikes'.<sup>452</sup> The majority of photographs published in the magazine were vernacular images of militant women organising, fundraising and performing the invisible labour of resistance. These tasks were frequently overlooked within male-dominated publications, but in each issue of *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, photographic portraits of activist women were printed to celebrate their participation. For example, in the midst of professional photographs of militiawomen in the July 1947 issue, two small and grainy photographs of Spanish militant women, seen in Figure 3.10, reminded the reader of the importance of everyday activism. The photographs depicted Teresa Ledesma, of a local branch of UME operating in the Seine, and Toribia Fernández, of the Blanc-Mesnil region, who were credited for their role in improving distribution of the magazine in different regions and taking part in a fundraising campaign for Basque women. In contrast to the anonymising gaze of war photography, these photographs explicitly identified who these women were and their roles within the organization, an approach that foregrounded women as activists rather than symbols.



Figure 3.10, *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, 'Nos informan de los departamentos', July 1947, p. 2. Courtesy of Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica.

<sup>452</sup> *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, 'Documentos Gráficos: La Lucha Clandestina de Nuestras Hermanas', June 1947, p. 12.

For militant women in exile, the radical press offered a space to construct their own political identity and build a narrative of war and resistance that explicitly included them. Yet, like in Ireland, women had to negotiate their presence within the gendered dynamics of the post-war resistance movement, which operated its own processes of erasure. Aligning with Hayes' theorisation of patriarchal condition of visibility, in order to justify and legitimise their participation, which was continually undermined by their male compatriots in the anti-Francoist resistance movement, women constructed their own legacy of women's militancy through photography.<sup>453</sup> Wartime images of militant women were framed within narratives of exceptionalism, and the majority of women's militancy during war was redefined within domestic narratives that were then excluded from Republican counter-narratives of war. Yet, through the radical press, women built their own pockets of visibility that allowed them to celebrate their own roles in the resistance. In both Ireland and Spain, women used the radical press to construct counter-narratives of war that foregrounded their experiences, even as the visibility they constructed was contradictory and subject to broader patriarchal structures. In the midst of the commemorations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Easter Rising and the Spanish Civil War in 1966 and 1985 respectively, militant women leveraged these pockets of defiant visibility in the radical press to negotiate a space for themselves in the public narratives and mythologies of war by republishing their photographs in memoirs and testimonies.

### 3.4 Subversive Snapshots: Clandestine Prison Photography in Siobhán de Paor's 'Blaze Away with Your Little Gun' (1968 | 1969)

Women used the Irish radical press to legitimise their participation in the revolution, but their presence in these publications remained ensconced within the wider patriarchal dynamics of post-war Irish nationalism. However, Irish women's photographic practices, which included clandestine prison photography, the re-publication of subversive images, and acts of deliberate photographic absence, allowed them to retake control over their visibility and challenge their erasure from public narratives of war. During the Irish Civil War, an estimated 400 women were detained without trial and imprisoned by the Irish Free State. Within the radical press, editors published testimonies from imprisoned women in order to attack the pro-Treaty government.<sup>454</sup> These inflammatory reports situated women within a gendered framework of victimhood, marking another way in which the republican movement reframed women as figures of feminised suffering in order to diminish the accusations of gender

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<sup>453</sup> Hayes, p. 521.

<sup>454</sup> Ryan, 'Splendidly Silent', p. 33.

transgression surrounding republican women. Yet, while women's imprisonment allowed male republicans to redefine them within a more acceptable gendered order, women's experiences of imprisonment were also critical in allowing them to publicly attest to their participation in the revolutionary period and resist their erasure in the patriarchal public narrative of the civil war. Women used their experiences of imprisonment and their participation in prisoner welfare campaigns to articulate their role in the republican movement, and they published their own testimonial accounts across the radical press, in autobiographical collections like Margaret Buckley's *Jangle of the Keys* (1938), and in feminist publications such as Maud Gonne's *Prison Bars* (1937-1938).<sup>455</sup> In this section, I expand on this discussion on women's post-war testimonial accounts by examining the role of women's photographic practices in preserving their counter-memories of the revolution and protesting their absence in public narratives of war that emerged during the Golden Jubilee of the Easter Rising in 1966. In particular, I focus on Siobhán and Mairead de Paor's testimonial article 'Blaze Away with Your Little Gun' published in *The Kerryman* in 1968, which reflected how women used prison photography to articulate their agency during war and contest the male-dominated revolutionary mythology constructed by the state in 1966.

The 50th anniversary of the Irish Revolution celebrated a triumphalist narrative of revolution that was dominated by heroic masculinity, with President de Valera stating that the Easter Rising was 'the action of a small group of dedicated men'.<sup>456</sup> Photography was key to this process, with portraits of the iconic, martyred leaders of 1916 reproduced across shopfronts and within commemorative photobooks.<sup>457</sup> These celebrations attempted to 'unite its citizens behind 1916 as the formative founding moment... of an independent Irish state', codifying a project of nation building that had centred on reclaiming the memory of 1916 from militant republicans and removing any traces of radical ideologies and non-normative gendered roles.<sup>458</sup> Within this patriarchal narrative, women were recognised only within exceptional narratives of romantic heroines or in the feminine roles of wife and mother. Faced

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<sup>455</sup> Karen Steele, 'Reading Maud Gonne: Gendered Poetics in the Advanced Nationalist Press', *Prose Studies*, 25.2 (2002), 102-121, p. 109. For more on women's imprisonment in the Irish Free State and their testimonies see: Laura McAtackney, 'Sensory deprivation during the Irish Civil War (1922-1923): Female political prisoners at Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin', in *Modern Conflict and the Senses*, ed. by Nicholas J. Saunders and Paul Cornish, (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 289-304; Aiken, 'The Women's Weapon', p. 91.

<sup>456</sup> Ryan Nolan, 'The Invisible Army of the Irish Republic: The Forgotten Women of 1916', in *Performing Memories: Media, Creation, Anthropology and Remembrance*, ed. by Gabriele Biotti (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), pp. 23-50, (p. 35)

<sup>457</sup> Carville, 'Visualising the Rising', pp. 91-109. For example, the photographer Adolf Morath was commissioned by the Irish government to produce a photographic book featuring colourised images of the 1916 leaders for the 1966 Golden Jubilee. Department of Foreign Affairs Archive, Dublin, 2000/14/70.

<sup>458</sup> Mary Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan, *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007), p. 7.

with the processes of delegitimisation and erasure embedded into the mechanisms of the Irish Free State, women struggled to gain agency over their own memories of the revolution. Testimonial writing, however, allowed them to subvert the silence imposed on them.<sup>459</sup> Within accounts such as 'Blaze Away' or Lil Conlon's *Cumann na mBan and the Women of Ireland* (1969), women leveraged the pockets of visibility constructed across private and radical networks in the aftermath of war to build a public counter-narrative of the revolution.

'Blaze Away' detailed the capture, arrest and imprisonment of the de Paor sisters, who were committed nationalists and members of Cumann na mBan during the War of Independence and the civil war. In 1923, they had been interned in Tralee Jail, Kilmainham and North Dublin Union for producing and distributing a propaganda pamphlet called *The Invincibles*. Like many Cumann na mBan women, their participation and role in the anti-Treaty movement was not recognised, driving them to publish 'Blaze Away' in an attempt to raise awareness of the role they, and their female comrades, played in the war and challenge the broader erasure of women in the commemorative narrative of the revolution constructed during the 1966 Golden Jubilee. For the de Paor sisters, 'Blaze Away' was a final effort to correct the exclusionary narrative of the Irish revolutionary period in the face of their impending mortality: Mairead de Paor died in February 1968, prior to the publication of the article, and Siobhán passed away in February 1969, one month after the final article was published. Furthermore, Siobhán's obituary mentioned that all of the 'girl internees', a deliberately minimising term, mentioned in the article were now dead.<sup>460</sup> Within Irish women's revolutionary memoirs during this time, there was a sense of urgency that echoed throughout all the texts which reflected the need to document their experiences and to authenticate them with photography. Through the photographs in 'Blaze Away', the de Paor sisters attempted to control how their militant legacy would be remembered.

Material approaches to prison photography have re-conceptualised photographs as emotional objects that allow prisoners to construct identities and political intimacies that facilitated relationships and shared memories of imprisonment.<sup>461</sup> Critical analysis of prison

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<sup>459</sup> Aiken, 'The Women's Weapon', p. 105.

<sup>460</sup> Unknown, 'Late Miss Jo Power, Lower Rock Street', *The Kerryman*, 8 February 1969.

<sup>461</sup> Nicole Fleetwood, 'Posing in Prison: Family Photographs, Emotional labour and Carceral Intimacy', *Public Culture*, 27.3 (2015), 487-511; Linda Mulcahy, 'Docile Suffragettes? Resistance to Police Photography and the Possibility of Object-Subject Transformation', *Feminist Legal Studies*, 23.1 (2015), 79-99, p. 73. Joanna Brück's work on prison craftwork during the Irish revolutionary period draws on a similar material approach to understand the importance of producing and preserving prison objects in mediating emotions and memories of imprisonment. Joanna Brück, 'Nationalism, Gender and Memory: Internment Camp Craftwork, 1916-1923', in *Making 1916: The Visual and Material Culture of the Easter Rising*, ed. by Lisa Godson and Joanne Brück (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 99-107, (p. 101).

photography has predominantly focused on the role of photography as a tool of surveillance and documentation; however, I argue that approaching Irish women's clandestine practices of prison photography through a material perspective allows us to understand how women mediated their agency through these images, and how they transformed them into objects of defiance.<sup>462</sup> In Ireland, the practices of photographing prisoners began with colonial projects of surveillance in Mountjoy Jail, which would later become a site of imprisonment for women during the Irish Civil War.<sup>463</sup> The state used photography to control prisoners during their incarceration and after their release, as it provided an easier means of identifying and keeping track of inmates. Prison photography emerged as its own genre; used not only to monitor prisoners but also to classify Irish people as 'deviant'.<sup>464</sup> Yet, these prison photographs became entangled in the visual practices of Irish nationalism, as prison photography was recirculated and reinterpreted to signify rebellion against the British state.<sup>465</sup> Irish Fenians, for example, used their prison photographs to resist the dehumanising gaze of the prison guard's camera, and circulated and recreated these photographs after their release to represent their political agency. This strategy of re-purposing prison photographs to visualise agency rather than subjugation would become a cornerstone of how militant Irish women constructed an alternative, revolutionary narrative.

During the Irish Civil War, the Irish Free State's photographic strategy focused on documenting the military successes of the army or the ruins left behind by the anti-Treaty IRA. Within state photographer W.D Hogan's collection, there are only scant references to prisons, in contrast to the photographic corpus of Francoist prisons that I will discuss in Section 3.5.<sup>466</sup> However, this lack of photographs did not mean that there was no attempt to document prisoners—rather, it is evidence of how women resisted the prison's regime of visibility. In Siobhán and Mairead de Paor's article 'Blaze Away', a memoir of their imprisonment during the Irish Civil War published across three issues of *The Kerryman*, from December 1968 to January 1969, they highlighted how the photographic absence of militant

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<sup>462</sup> Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*, p. 11. For more on photography within the context of the police and prison see: Jonathan Finn, 'Making the Criminal Visible: Photography and Criminality', in *Routledge International Handbook of Visual Criminology*, ed. by Michelle Brown and Eamonn Carrabine (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 121-34; Lorena Rizzo, 'Shades of Empire: Police Photography in German South-West Africa', *Visual Anthropology*, 26.4, (2013), 328-54; James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>463</sup> Gail Baylis, 'A Few Too Many Photographs? Indexing Digital Histories', *History of Photography*, 38.1 (2014), 3-20, p. 5.

<sup>464</sup> Sarah Edge, 'Photographic History and the Visual Appearance of an Irish Nationalist Discourse, 1840-1870', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32.1 (2004), 17-39, pp. 33-4.

<sup>465</sup> Gail Baylis, 'The Photographic Portrait: a Means to Surveillance and Subversion', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 16.1 (2018), 1-23.

<sup>466</sup> White, p. 130.

women was a deliberate tactic by women prisoners. The pro-republican press used accounts of mistreatment of women prisoners to attack the Irish Free State, and in response to this, the Irish Free State sought to use photography to document women prisoners and provide visual evidence to reject these claims.<sup>467</sup>

In the sisters' testimonial account, they described how republican prisoners resisted against being photographed for this propaganda operation. In the summer of 1923, after the violent removal of prisoners to North Dublin Union, many of the women had been sent bright summer frocks and wore them while they sat outside during their free time, a scene that prompted prison guards to 'take photographs...to show the outside world what a pleasant time the prisoners were having'.<sup>468</sup> Through these images, the state would not only have had supposed evidence against claims of mistreatment, but they would also have further underscored the state's control over the women prisoners; controlling both how they were seen in that moment and how they would be remembered.<sup>469</sup> The women contested this enforced visibility, as their commanding officers in the prison ordered them to 'keep moving about when they [the guards] were detected with cameras'.<sup>470</sup> With this deliberate photographic absence, the women rejected being seen on the terms of the Irish Free State, whose authority and legitimacy they refused to acknowledge and actively challenged. Furthermore, their defiance signalled their opposition to being redefined within narratives of domestic femininity, which informed their decision to produce and circulate their own clandestine photographs that questioned this narrative.

In October 1923, Siobhán de Paor was granted a week's parole to visit a dying friend, and on her return, she smuggled in a small Kodak Brownie box camera. The Brownie was a popular camera used widely in the early twentieth-century in Ireland, particularly among women, and it was renowned for giving 'expression to invisible lives'.<sup>471</sup> The snapshot photography of the Brownie is an example of the importance of everyday, vernacular photographs in disrupting the hegemonic structures of power that governed public visibility and representation.<sup>472</sup> Using this smuggled camera, de Paor shot a series of portraits of her inmates: Annie Sinnott, Frances Casey, Agnes Sheehy and Sighle Humphreys, seen in Figure

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<sup>467</sup> McAttackney, 'Sensory experiences', p. 296.

<sup>468</sup> Mairead and Siobhán de Paor, 'Blaze Away With Your Little Gun', *The Kerryman*, 4 January 1969.

<sup>469</sup> Catherine Zuromskis, 'On Snapshot Photography: Rethinking Photographic Power in Public and Private Spaces', in *Photography: Theoretical Snapshots*, ed. by J.J. Long, Andrea Noble and Edward Welch (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 49-62, (p. 51).

<sup>470</sup> Mairead and Siobhán de Paor, 'Blaze Away With Your Little Gun', *The Kerryman*, 4 January 1969.

<sup>471</sup> Gil Pasternak, '"The Brownies in Palestine": Politicizing Geographies in Family Photographs', *Photography and Culture*, 6.1 (2013), 41-63, p. 45.

<sup>472</sup> Nancy West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 121.

3.11 and Figure 3.12, which interrupted the gendered power dynamics of prison. These are the only known photographs of imprisoned women in the North Dublin Union. After her release, she developed these photographs and preserved these photographs in a private album, until finally opening them to the wider public visibility in *The Kerryman*. While the prisoners of North Dublin Union rejected the compulsory visibility imposed on them by the authorities, these photographs demonstrate how they produced their own clandestine documentation of their imprisonment, which framed them as militants rather than as the docile objects of propaganda.<sup>473</sup> In doing so, these women took control over how they were seen, and they acted as their own visual agents in the production, circulation, consumption and exchange of these images.



**Figure 3.11**, Siobhán de Paor, Photograph of Mairead de Paor, in *The Kerryman*, 21 December 1968. Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol.

<sup>473</sup> The demand of compulsory visibility has been problematised by Patricia Hayes, who describes it as a practice linked to repression and imperialism. Hayes, pp. 521-2.



**Figure 3.12**, Siobhán de Paor, Photographs of Casey, Sinnott, Hassett and Sheehy, in *The Kerryman*, 28 December 1968. Courtesy of Kilmainham Gaol.

The de Paor sisters wrote 'Blaze Away' in the context of an Ireland that had continuously denied women recognition for their participation in war, and which was currently refusing to acknowledge women's actions within its commemorative narrative. Siobhán de Paor's clandestine photography constructed an alternative war narrative and photographic gaze that foregrounded the erased experiences of women. These photographs explicitly identified the women pictured within them, challenging the vagueness and anonymity that had characterised women's participation in male-authored memoirs and

biographies.<sup>474</sup> Additionally, they dismantled the arbitrary division of militant engagement, as they detailed the histories of the women photographed, and the reason for their internment. Producing propaganda, gunrunning, sheltering fugitives, espionage and participation within illegal organisations were all used to justify imprisoning women, yet as Marie Coleman has noted in her study of women's pension applications, these activities were not considered adequate for military compensation.<sup>475</sup> In addressing the diverse ways women engaged with militancy, the de Paor sisters deconstructed the gendered mythos surrounding the Irish revolutionary period, and critiqued the continued erasure of women's revolutionary experience.

Within the article, the photographs authenticated women's revolutionary experiences, similarly to the production of revolutionary portraiture. In contrast to the heavily posed, uniformed studio portraits seen in Chapter 2, these unedited images with less visually-striking compositions provide another perspective on how militant Irish women used vernacular photography to articulate their militancy. The women posed together in hidden, outside spaces, huddled close to each other to disguise what they were doing, with little room for creative compositions or multiple shots. Indeed, their uniform appearance draws comparison to the traditions of institutional prison photography. Yet, de Paor's familiar and intimate photographs subverted this genre of prison photography, as they challenged the power dynamics of the prison gaze. Rather than recording criminality, these photographs were a record of defiance. As these images circulated across both family networks and the public press, the photographs became evidence of women's militancy that countered narratives excluding them from national mythologies of war.<sup>476</sup> Furthermore, by providing clear captions identifying each of the women, and situating and contextualising these images within a testimonial account, de Paor ensured that the meaning of these photographs was not dislodged as they entered the public sphere.<sup>477</sup> In anchoring these photographs to the text, the de Paor sisters sought to preserve the meaning and memory of these photographs as objects of militant women's agency and their resistance to erasure. These photographs represented a collective experience of militancy, and they challenge the discourses of exceptionalism that marked how militant women were adopted into the public revolutionary narrative.

Siobhán de Paor's clandestine photographic practices disrupted the cultural narratives surrounding war and Irish femininity, as she captured and articulated militant identities on her

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<sup>474</sup> Louise Ryan, 'Splendidly Silent', pp. 33-4.

<sup>475</sup> Coleman, pp. 918-20.

<sup>476</sup> Cross and Peck, p. 129.

<sup>477</sup> Karen Cross, 'The Lost of Found Photography', *Photographies*, 8.1 (2015), 43–62, p. 44.

own terms, rather than from the view of a prison guard, a propagandist or a professional photographer. She preserved these photographs throughout the post-war period, and controlled how they re-entered the visual economy of Irish war photography. The photographic afterlives of these clandestine images subverted the male-dominated, public narratives of war and the limited ways of visualising women within these frameworks. While the public circulation of these photographs, like Irish and Spanish women's writings in the radical press, did not substantively disrupt the public narrative of war, their publication in the wake of the Golden Jubilee is evidence of how militant women preserved their revolutionary experiences and how they defied state ideologies to publicly challenge hegemonic narratives of war. Against a commemorative landscape that actively excluded women, photographs enabled women to reclaim their own histories of war, a process that can also be seen in Spain after the fall of the Francoist dictatorship.

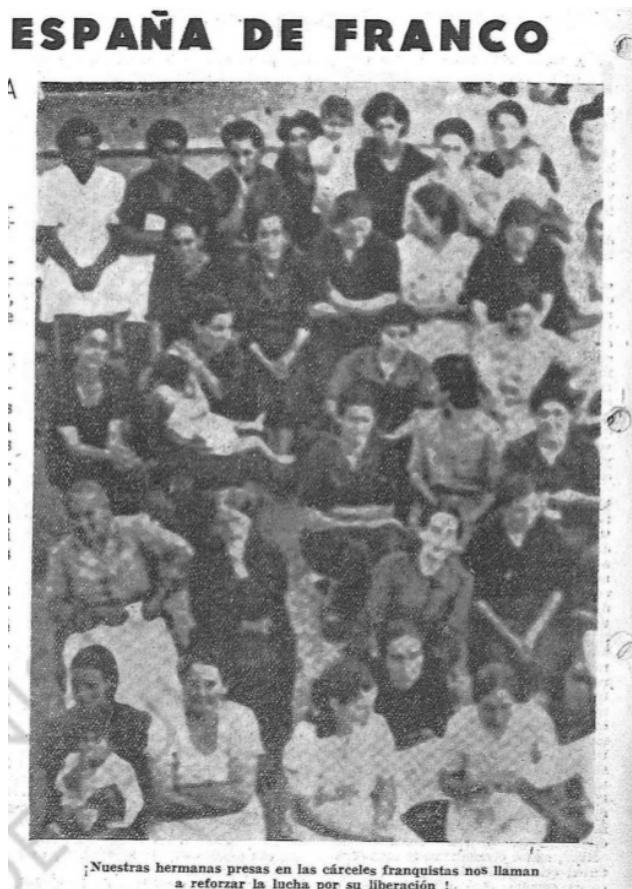
### 3.5 Reclaiming Prison Photography: Photographic Counter-Narratives in Tomasa Cuevas' *Testimonios de Mujeres* (1985 | 1986)

In contrast to imprisoned Irish women, the photographic visibility of Spanish militant women was fundamental to the post-conflict visual economy of both the Francoist and radical exile press. Photographs of imprisoned women circulated across borders, taking on new meanings as they were republished in new contexts. For example, the photograph in Figure 3.13 was originally published in the Catholic newspaper *Redención: Órgano del Patronato para la Redención de las Penas por el Trabajo* as part of a visual campaign highlighting Republican women's re-education and supposed redemption under the Catholic penal system. However, through its re-circulation in *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, it was adopted into the magazine's rhetoric of resistance as a rallying call to mobilise their readership as the magazine redefined the image and captioned it instead as 'our imprisoned sisters...call on us to strengthen the fight for their liberation'.<sup>478</sup> Yet, through this process of photographic re-circulation and redefinition, imprisoned women were rendered passive victims of the Francoist regime, even as the transnational circulation of these photographs and accompanying letters in fact pointed to women's continued political resistance in prison.<sup>479</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Redemption: Organ of the Committee for the Redemption of Prison Sentences Through Work, henceforth *Redención*

<sup>479</sup> Deirdre Finnerty, 'The Republican Mother in Post-Transition Novels of Historical Memory: A Re-Inscription into Spanish Cultural Memory?', in *Memory and Cultural History of the Spanish Civil War: Realms of Oblivion*, ed. by Aurora Gómez Morcillo (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 213-45 ,(p. 220). For further information on how militant women maintained their roles in the resistance in prison see: Verónica Sierra Blas, 'La Información Como Resistencia: Periódicos Manuscritos en las Cárcel de Franco', in *Prensa, Impresos, Lectura en el Mundo Hispánico*



**Figure 3.13**, 'Documentos Impresionantes del Régimen Terrorista en la España de Franco', *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, February 1947, p. 7. Courtesy of Biblioteca Virtual de la Prensa Histórica, Madrid.

Like in Ireland, Spanish women's photographic engagement and their role as curators of images in 'collecting, preserving, displaying and narrating photography' was critical in contesting their erasure and maintaining a continuous narrative of women's militancy in the face of dislocation and exclusion from male-dominated narratives of war.<sup>480</sup> While photographic circulation in the radical press made militant women visible, it did so in a way that maintained a patriarchal gaze and which redefined them as victims, with little acknowledgement of their own agency and role in anti-Francoist resistance. Conventionally, prison photography has captured women within a patriarchal, subjugating gaze.<sup>481</sup> However, Spanish women's reclamation of prison photography sought to subvert these power dynamics,

*Contemporáneo: Homenaje a Jean-François Botrel*, ed. by Jean-Michel Desvois (Bordeaux: PILAR, 2005), pp. 437-462, (p. 440).

<sup>480</sup> For more on the concept of women acting as curators of images see: Darren Newbury, Lorenza Rizzo and Kylie Thomas, *Women and Photography in Africa: Creative Practices and Feminist Challenges* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), p. 8. For the roles of Irish and Spanish women as curators of images, see Higgins, 'Curators of Memory', pp. 217-19 and Moreno Andres, p. 86.

<sup>481</sup> Mulcahy, p. 80.

as they remade these images into artefacts of defiance and agency by republishing and re-contextualising them in testimonial writing.

In this section, I examine how the Spanish testimonial author Tomasa Cuevas used photography to build a counter-narrative of war and resistance. A Communist militant imprisoned firstly for her participation in the civil war and thereafter for her role in the anti-Francoist resistance, Cuevas collected the experiences of over 40 women imprisoned under the Francoist regime and published it in three volumes: *Cárcel de Mujeres (1939-1945)* (Volume 1, 1985), *Cárcel de Mujeres (Ventas, Segovia, Les Corts)* (Volume 2, 1985), and *Mujeres en la Resistencia* (1986).<sup>482</sup> She published this ‘cacophony of condemnation’ to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1986 as a protest against the continued erasure of Republican women.<sup>483</sup> In the aftermath of war, the Francoist regime silenced Republican women’s experiences of war, and they continued to be marginalised during the transition to democracy after Franco’s death in 1975. The transition was characterised by an apparent determination to ‘forget’ the war, and while Republican counter-narratives of war began to emerge in the aftermath of the dictatorship, these were dominated by male experiences of resistance.<sup>484</sup> Ruth Fisher has argued that women’s testimonies of imprisonment were motivated by their omission from contemporary scholarship, and I argue that photographs in particular served as evidence to authenticate their presence and further contest their erasure.<sup>485</sup> Women’s photographic practices created a visual narrative of women’s militancy, filtered through vernacular images rather than the iconic war photography.

During the Francoist dictatorship, photographs of women were central to the visual construction of the post-war nation. As with the consolidation of Catholic ideologies in the governance of the Irish Free State, the Francoist dictatorship cultivated a state ideology of National Catholicism and ‘Hispanidad’, which constructed a ‘national-patriotic imaginary’ of a

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<sup>482</sup> Due to restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, I have been unable to access the original copies of these volumes, which were published in Barcelona by Sirocco. In this thesis, I refer to *Testimonios de Mujeres* (2004), which collates all three volumes of Cuevas’ biographies together in a single volume. This edition did not revise Cuevas’ original work beyond copyediting. Tomasa Cuevas, *Testimonios de Mujeres en las Cárcel Franquistas*, ed. by Jorge Montes Salguero (Huesca: Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 2004).

<sup>483</sup> Ruth Fisher, ‘Resistance and Survival: Deconstructing the Narratives of Women Political Prisoners after the Spanish Civil War’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2018) p. 62.

<sup>484</sup> Mangini, p. 173; Kathryn Everley, *History, Violence and the Hyperreal: Representing Culture in Contemporary Spanish Novels* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2010), pp. 63-65. Militant women’s experiences of imprisonment and resistance remained marginalised within these narratives, due to the stigma of having been imprisoned and the legacies of trauma endured in these prisons. In the mid-1980s, militant women began to challenge this silence through testimonial memoirs, which articulated their experiences of imprisonment, exile and trauma alongside attesting to their active participation in both war and the anti-Francoist resistance.

<sup>485</sup> Fisher, p. 18.

unified Spanish nation, where a state regime of Catholicism constituted ‘the essence of Spain itself’.<sup>486</sup> Within the visual regime of the dictatorship, official propaganda and popular media distributed photographs of idealised, Catholic women to establish a gendered national identity and ideology, while photographs of Republican women signified how left-wing ideologies corrupted this gendered order.<sup>487</sup> Photography was also a central part of demonstrating the consequences of not adhering to the model of femininity dictated by Francoism, as suspected Republican women were subjected to ritualised gender punishment and violence, with their suffering and humiliation immortalised on film as both perpetrators and bystanders took photographs of these events.<sup>488</sup> However, the most prominent images of Republican women circulating in post-war Spain were published in the Catholic newspaper *Redención*, which visualised Republican women within the Catholic penal ideology of control and redemption.

Published in Madrid from 1939-1977, *Redención* disseminated propaganda relating to work, behaviour and religious instruction, and documented the successes of the ‘Redemption through Work’ programme.<sup>489</sup> In 1939, the Catholic Church was given control over the penal system, which they used to regulate public morality, prevent the Republican corruption of public society, and redeem women through a programme of penance and re-education.<sup>490</sup> The integration of Catholic ideologies and politics of shame into the penal system saw prisons emerge as a site of control and conversion, with the supposed redemption of political

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<sup>486</sup> Xavier Laudo and Conrad Vilanou, ‘Educational Discourse in Spain during the early Franco regime (1936-1943): Towards a Genealogy of Doctrine and Concepts’, *Paedagogica Historica*, 51.4 (2015), 434-54, p. 442; Lorraine Ryan, ‘The sins of the father’, p. 247. As Johannes Großmann argues, in ideological terms, *Hispanidad* was a metaphor for national unity within Spain and foregrounded Spain’s role as an enforcer of Catholic values, which presented the Nationalist insurgents as the inheritors of the crusaders and the Catholic counter-reformation. Johannes Großmann, “Baroque Spain” As Metaphor: *Hispanidad*, Europeanism and Cold War Anti-Communism in Francoist Spain’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 91.5 (2014), 755-71.

<sup>487</sup> Gómez Morcillo, *The Seduction of Modern Spain* p. 15; Anna Pelka, ‘Mujer e Ideología En La Posguerra Espanola: Feminidad, Cuerpo y Vestido’, *Historia Social*, 79 (2014), 23-42.

<sup>488</sup> Laia Quílez Estevez, “‘Pelonas’ y Rapadas: Imágenes-Trofeo e Imágenes-Denuncia de La Represión de Género Ejercida Durante La Guerra Civil Espanola”, *Hispanic Review*, 86.4 (2018), 487-509. See also, Charlotte Walmsley, ‘Victims, Perpetrators and Bystanders: Reconceptualising Head Shaving in Liberation France and Civil War Spain as Gender-Based Violence’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cardiff, 2021), p. 220.

<sup>489</sup> Juan Carlos García-Funes, ‘El Semanario Redención : Un Estilo de Coacción y Propaganda’, in *Nuevos Horizontes Del Pasado: Culturas Políticas, Identidades y Formas de Representación*, ed. by Ángeles Barrio Alonso, Jorge De Hoyos Puente, and Rebeca Saavedra Arias (Santander: Ediciones de la Universidad de Cantabria, 2011), pp. 124-33.

<sup>490</sup> Gómez Morcillo, *The Seduction of Modern Spain*, p. 92; Aurora Gómez Morcillo, ‘Walls of Flesh: Spanish Postwar Reconstruction and Public Morality’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 84.6 (2007), 737-58; Gutmaro Gómez Bravo, ‘The Origins of the Francoist Penitentiary System’, *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 23.1 (2010), 5-21. The Catholic control over penal and moral institutions parallels the Irish Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes, which also controlled women under the guise of morality: the existence of these places was a threat and a reminder of the Church’s power. The legacies of these gendered punishments are still present in Irish and Spanish society today. Clara Fischer, ‘Gender, Nation and the Politics of Shame: Magdalen Laundries and the Institutionalization of Feminine Transgression in Modern Ireland’, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 41.4 (2016), 821-43; Richards, ‘Morality and Biology’, p. 395; Lorraine Ryan, ‘The Sins of the Father’, pp. 247-9.

prisoners seen as a way to integrate them into Spanish society—though, they would continue to be heavily monitored and persecuted even after their release.<sup>491</sup> The policy of redemption through work, which was documented in publications such as *Redención*, aimed to isolate and break solidarities between prisoners, as well as provide labour for the state.<sup>492</sup> Through a programme of work and religious instruction, prisoners minimised their sentences and earned privileges in order to re-enter society as ‘a Christian, a Spaniard and a perfect worker’.<sup>493</sup>



**Figure 3.14**, Unknown, ‘Bautizo de Tres Reclusas’, published in *Redención*. Courtesy of Fundación de Investigaciones Marxistas, Cordoba.

Photographs were integral to transmitting *Redención*’s Catholic ideologies. *Redención* hired photojournalists such as Martín Santos Yubero to take photographs of women prisoners that highlighted the potential of redemption through religion, and presented the prisons as an environment of reform, rather than punishment. Photographs of women celebrating religious festivals with their children, learning domestic skills such as sewing, and entrenching themselves into gendered practices of Catholicism, as seen in Figure 3.14 with the baptism of

<sup>491</sup> Gutmaro Gómez Bravo, “Loving the Punished”: The Prison System and the Church in the Post-War Period in *Mass Killings and Violence in Spain, 1935-1952*, ed. by Peter Anderson and Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 137-53, (p. 137).

<sup>492</sup> Gómez Bravo, ‘The Origins of the Francoist Penitentiary System’, pp. 12-3.

<sup>493</sup> Gutmaro Gómez Bravo, ‘Franquismo, Cárcel y Propaganda: El Periódico Redención’, *Oficina de Historiador*, 8.1 (2015), 118-34, p. 122.

three prisoners, illustrated the magazine and provided visual evidence of the success of the Francoist campaign to re-catholicise Spain. These images were, of course, deceptive; they presented an image of tranquillity that was the exception to prisoner's lives.



**Figure 3.15**, Martín Santos Yubero, 'Procesión del Corpus', 1939. Courtesy of Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid, Madrid.

For example, in order to conform to the maternal ideals of Catholic womanhood, *Redención* continually circulated photographs of prisoners and their children, yet these photographs only captured the rare moments women were allowed contact with their children. Additionally, there was a strict editorial oversight over these images to ensure they adhered to the newspaper's overall aim of social control—for instance, the photograph in Figure 3.15, shot by Santos Yubero in Ventas Prison in Madrid in 1939, was not published in the newspaper. His images of women kneeling before the Procession of Corpus Christi were shot to show women engaging in religious life, but the women subverted this photographic frame. Santos Yubero, who had previously worked for Republican magazines such as *Crónica*

and *Estampa*, captured the women's angry looks and refusal to kneel and perform piety in front of the camera. While these images were intended to subjugate women, women also used them to mark their resistance against the institutional gaze, paralleling the strategy of deliberate photographic absence employed by Irish militant women in North Dublin Union.



Coro de reclusas de la cárcel de Les Corts que interpretaron *Las lagarteranas*. Periódico *Redención*.

**Figure 3.16**, 'Coro de Reclusas', originally from *Redención*, published in Tomasa Cuevas, *Testimonios de Mujeres*, 1985, p. 511.

By republishing these photographs in her testimonial account, Cuevas mobilised the afterlives of these images to build an alternative narrative of Republican women that contested the erasure of their roles in the resistance. Like de Paor's 'Blaze Away', Cuevas maintained women's agency and militant identity within these Francoist prison photographs by explicitly identifying the women pictured and locating them within their own testimonies. Through this, she actively challenged the anonymising gaze that had previously sublimated the identities of these women into the single category of prisoner. By interweaving these photographs into their own narratives of anti-Francoist resistance, the women interviewed in Cuevas' book subverted and redefined these photographs. The narrative surrounding Figure 3.16 and Figure 3.17, for example, revealed the hidden undertones of defiance hidden within this apparent complicity with the Catholic programme of redemption. Figure 3.16 depicted a group of women dressed in traditional costumes performing a play for a religious festival. In the centre of this group of women was Victoria Pujolar, who used her participation within the

redemption programme to gain access to the prison offices and communication systems in order to plan her escape to Toulouse.



De izquierda a derecha, Angelita Ramis, Victoria Pujolar y Adelaida Abarca. Satisfechas del éxito de la fuga, disfrutan de su *liberación* por las calles de Toulouse.

**Figure 3.17**, 'Women Enjoying Their Liberation', in Tomasa Cuevas, *Testimonios de Mujeres*, 1985, p. 518.

Cuevas recorded how Pujolar and three other women from the Les Corts prison used the scheme to gain the trust of the prison officers and enact their escape to France, helped by the networks of militant women outside the prison.<sup>494</sup> Figure 3.16 was thus remade from evidence of women's redemption into a Catholic, patriarchal order into a sign of women's resistance against the dictatorship. Pujolar's testimonial account ended with Figure 3.17, a snapshot of three of the women from Les Corts prison safe in exile in France. Placed into dialogue and situated within the story of women's defiance and escape, Cuevas' framing of the two images reveals the hidden narratives with Figure 3.16.

As well as using photographs to challenge the narrative that had been constructed by the Francoist dictatorship, Cuevas mobilised photography to re-insert women into the male-dominated, Republican narrative of resistance. As Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo has discussed, the

<sup>494</sup> Cuevas, pp. 509-28.

post-war narrative of the anti-Francoist resistance movement has been dominated by patriarchal paradigms of participation, with women's roles in clandestine organisations and prisons disregarded.<sup>495</sup> In her third volume, *Mujeres de la Resistencia*, Cuevas engaged with photography as a way to resituate women's contributions into the patriarchal narrative of resistance, explicitly making visible actions that had gone unrecognised. She used militant women's vernacular photography to do so; publishing portraits of women that legitimised their participation and relocated them in the areas where they undertook clandestine activities. I consider these examples of aftermath photography, which constructs a different way of seeing war by engaging with the traces and multiple histories of war left behind after the event.<sup>496</sup> Unlike the examples of propagandistic war photography discussed earlier in this thesis, which centred a masculine image of war that glorified battle and heroism, these aftermath photographs focused on the nexus of trauma, exclusion, and defiant remembrance that characterised militant women's post-war recollections. As Jessica Neath argues in her article on Tasmanian Aboriginal photography, aftermath photography and its representation of traumatic events is often an attempt to redress history and historical myth.<sup>497</sup> These photographs re-activate memories of conflict that could not be shown and 'reveals that which cannot be seen... that lie in the depths of the image and beyond the picture frame'.<sup>498</sup> Aftermath photography is characterised by a highly visible emptiness, and, as my analysis of Figure 3.18 below will show, this paradoxical visual dynamic of seeing and not seeing resonates with the complexity of militant women's visibility throughout post-conflict narratives of war in Ireland and Spain.<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Yusta Rodrigo, 'Hombres Armados', p. 291.

<sup>496</sup> Aftermath photography, unlike amateur and professional war photography, does not capture spectacles of battle or human suffering, but rather is a vehicle for 'mass mourning or working through [traumatic events]'. Aftermath photography brings an understanding of absence into the photographic frame of war, a way of documenting war that accounts for those on the margins of conventional narratives and cultural representations of conflict. For further discussion see: David Campany, 'Safety in Numbness: Some Remarks on Problems of "Late Photography"', in *Where Is The Photograph?*, ed. by David Green (Maidstone: Photoworks, 2003), pp. 84-94; Antonio Monegal, 'Picturing Absence: Photography in the Aftermath', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 9.3 (2016), 252-70; Veronica Tello, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Aftermath Photography: Rosemary Laing's *Welcome to Australia* (2004)', *Third Text*, 28.6 (2014), 555-62.

<sup>497</sup> Jessica Neath, 'Empty Lands: Contemporary Art Approaches to Photographing Historical Trauma in Tasmania', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 36.3 (2012), 309-25. As Neath explores, understandings of historical trauma are particularly relevant to aftermath photography, as the question of how trauma is depicted in photographic practices can disrupt established knowledge of the past by presenting perspectives from outside the dominant gaze. See also: Debbie Lisle, 'The Surprising Detritus of Leisure: Encountering the Late Photography of War', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29.5 (2011), 873-90; Tello, pp. 557-8; Frank Möller, 'From Aftermath to Peace: Reflections on a Photography of Peace', *Global Society*, 31.3 (2017), 315-35.

<sup>498</sup> Donna West Brett, *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany After 1945* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 78.

<sup>499</sup> West Brett, p. 77.



Adelina Delgado, *la Madre*. Al fondo, las montañas donde estaban los guerrilleros y el camino por donde iban a llevarles lo que necesitaban.

**Figure 3.18**, ‘Adelina Delgado’, published in Tomasa Cuevas, *Testimonios de Mujeres*, p. 621.

Cuevas’ interview with Adelina Delgado Correcher, nicknamed ‘The Mother’, reflected how militant women used aftermath photographs to mediate and articulate their own invisible role in the resistance movement. Like the other women interviewed by Cuevas, Delgado Correcher used the space of testimonial literature to attest to her activism during the war, her imprisonment, and her continued militancy with anti-Francoist guerrillas in Valencia, and her imprisonment. She illustrated her account with two photographs. The first was an image of her husband in the house they used as safe house for guerrillas, and the second, seen in Figure 3.18, was a grainy photograph taken shortly before her death that depicted her standing alone in front of the Valencian mountains that had been the centre point of guerrilla operations during the dictatorship. The distant framing of this photography made her features indistinct and difficult to read as she was dwarfed by the mountainous backdrop. Yet, the caption to this photograph, provided by Delgado Correcher to Cuevas, revealed how this abstracted image represented the previously unseen traces of women’s militancy.

The caption identified it as ‘the mountains where the guerrillas were and the path they [the

women] went to deliver what they needed'.<sup>500</sup> In having this photograph of herself taken, Delgado Correcher inserted herself back into the narrative of war and resistance, reclaiming a role that had been denied and undermined by her male compatriots. Photography allowed women to visualise their participation in war and resistance movements, and through publicly publishing and circulating these images, they turned the viewer into witnesses of their militancy.



Rosario Sánchez Mora, *la Dinamitera*, en Barcelona durante las jornadas sobre la guerra civil en España.

**Figure 3.19**, Tomasa Cuevas, 'Rosario Sánchez Mora, the Dynamiter', *Testimonios de Mujeres*, p. 169.

Finally, in collecting testimonies and memories of imprisoned Republican women, Tomasa Cuevas allowed these women to exert their agency and retake control over their narrative. By juxtaposing photographs of imprisoned women with contemporary images shot by the women themselves after their release, Cuevas highlighted how women survived the regime and saw their fight for a liberated Spain achieved. This is particularly notable in Rosario Sánchez Mora's entry, which was illustrated with the photograph in Figure 3.19.

<sup>500</sup> Cuevas, p. 621.

Unlike most of the women interviewed in Cuevas' testimony, Sánchez Mora was already an iconic figure within the Republican popular narrative of war, immortalised through propaganda and Miguel Hernández's war poetry as the forever-youthful militiawoman 'Rosario the Dynamiter' who had lost a hand fighting against Nationalist insurgents.<sup>501</sup> During the transition to democracy, the pair met again at a conference in Barcelona and after hearing about Cuevas' testimonial project, Sánchez Mora declared 'Tomasita, give me the tape recorder, I also want to speak'.<sup>502</sup>

Sánchez Mora used Cuevas' book to articulate her own experiences of war, imprisonment, resistance and survival, moving beyond her representation as revolutionary symbol in Republican poetry and visual culture. While a heroic death or mutilation allowed women to be inscribed into popular narratives of war, they were not commemorated or remembered as individuals, but redefined as symbols.<sup>503</sup> In this gendered mythos, there was no space for Sánchez Mora's post-war experiences in prison and the resistance; however, Cuevas offered her the space to record her experiences and complicate the symbolic figure of the *militiana* within the patriarchal, Republican narrative of war. Indeed, by including a snapshot of Sánchez Mora on her release from prison, rather than as a young militiawomen, they challenged how the complexity of women's militancy has been distilled into iconic photographic moments. Through reframing Sánchez Mora's experiences within a collective understanding of militancy, Cuevas attempted to dismantle the reductive mythology of women's militancy that emphasised individual symbols and iconic actions.

Cuevas' testimonial collection engaged with photography as a way to disrupt patriarchal narratives of war and resistance by making women's roles and participation visible. Militant women's photographic practices demonstrate that photographs do not contain a single meaning, but rather that they are the vessel for multiple histories. In particular, her photographic engagement revealed the hidden narratives of subversion and defiance contained within these images, which could only become apparent when they were anchored to women's memories of war and resistance. By repurposing Francoist propaganda images and relocating them within the life stories of the women themselves, Cuevas allowed the women to retake control over how they are seen and challenge the subjugating gaze that these photographs were shot under. While photographic reproductions of women often replicate the power dynamics behind their production, Republican militant women's engagement with these

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<sup>501</sup> Linhard, *Fearless Women*, p. 119.

<sup>502</sup> Cuevas, p. 169.

<sup>503</sup> Linhard, *Fearless Women*, p. 192.

images challenged the narratives they constructed and revealed what was present outside of the photographic frame. Vernacular photographs were integral to this process of disruption, as these photographs actively recognised women's invisible labour in the resistance and drew attention to the complex afterlives of revolutionary women. Through their photographic practices, both Siobhán de Paor and Tomasa Cuevas departed from the traditional iconographies of women's heroism to instead develop their own photographic corpus of women's militancy, which shed light on the diverse spectrum of actions that women participated in and highlighted the participation of previously unknown and unrecognised women. The photographs in *Testimonios de Mujeres* allowed women to reclaim their histories, construct their own narrative of the Spanish Civil War, and demand inclusion into the mainstream, historical narrative.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In a narrative of war dominated by masculine experiences, Irish and Spanish militant women were rendered silent and invisible, and as Louise Ryan has astutely noted, 'silent, invisible women... had no place in glorious national histories'.<sup>504</sup> However, the evidence in this chapter contradicts this rhetoric of invisibility, as I have demonstrated that militant women did not choose to be silent but rather the post-war state and patriarchal resistance organisations imposed silence upon them, erasing them from public mythologies of war. In the face of this active omission from institutional narratives of conflict, women embraced the challenge of remembrance themselves. Across scrapbooks and testimonial literature, within family albums and the political press, Irish and Spanish militant women mediated their experiences of war, revolution, imprisonment, and erasure. For militant women, photography was a tool of acknowledgement, of remembrance, and a way to defy the patriarchal narratives of war that had deliberately silenced them.

Irish and Spanish militant women's photographic practices formed part of a constellation of resistance to the state's efforts to disempower and erase women from institutional narratives of war. Yet, within wider histories of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, women's photographic engagement remains under-analysed; particularly due to their vernacular nature, as vernacular photography has commonly been excluded from the photographic canon of war.<sup>505</sup> In this chapter, I emphasised how integrating vernacular photographic practices into our analysis enriches our understanding of

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<sup>504</sup> Ryan, 'Splendidly Silent', p. 42.

<sup>505</sup> Oldfield, 'Calling the Shots', p. 27.

gender and war. The circulation of women's photography from imprisoned Spanish women to the editors of *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas* demonstrated how women's radical networks built transnational resistance movements, while women's editorials in *An Phoblacht* highlighted their role in the dissident Irish republican movement. Feminist histories of war have continuously relied on reading archives against the grain and embracing non-standard sources.

The case studies in this chapter show how women's photographic practices offer new perspectives on women's militancy that disrupts the narrative of their silence and invisibility. For instance, going beyond iconic photographs of women and examining everyday images broadens our understanding of women's experiences of war, and further reinforces that militancy is a spectrum of actions spanning domestic and public space. The photographs in this chapter highlight the experiences of women who, unlike the iconic images seen in the previous chapter, were never photographed holding a gun, but whose participation was nevertheless critical within war and resistance movements. Furthermore, women's vernacular photographic practices allow us to begin dismantling the power dynamics within women's visibility. Hayes has problematised the demand to make women visible, as it reproduces the patriarchal gaze of professional, male photographers and can, in effect, silence women further.<sup>506</sup> Women's vernacular photographs, however, are an example of their photographic agency, and examining the circulation of these images within the wider visual economy allows us to understand how women controlled their visibility. In essence, by tracing Irish and Spanish women's photographic practices throughout the post-conflict period, I am not making them visible, but rather understanding how they sought to make themselves visible within radical and public narratives of war.

The construction of these counter-narratives within private spaces, the radical press, and testimonial accounts, however, reflected the complexity of women's militant visibility, and the ways in which it was entangled with broader processes of erasure. The first note to make here is that, of course, many women preserved their own histories of war but did not speak out about it publicly.<sup>507</sup> In the aftermath of war, the newly established governments in both Ireland and Spain instituted a culture of shame around women's militancy, presenting them as threats to national cohesion and redefining them in the public eye as unfeminine 'furies' and

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<sup>506</sup> Hayes, p. 521.

<sup>507</sup> Laura McAttackney, Síobhra Aiken and Jo Labanyi all discuss instances of women's silence and its implications on remembrance. McAttackney, '1916 and After', pp. 67-72; Aiken, 'Sick on the Irish Sea', p. 96-7; Jo Labanyi, 'The Languages of Silence: Historical Memory, Generational Transmission and Witnessing in Contemporary Spain', *The Journal of Romance Studies*, 9.3 (2009), 23-35, pp. 30-2.

bloodthirsty ‘reds’. In a post-conflict environment that disempowered and delegitimised militant women, and which marginalised them from mainstream society, many women chose to remain silent about their participation as a deliberate strategy for survival, assembling scrapbooks in secret and hiding photographs until they were rediscovered by family members after their death.<sup>508</sup> These private photographs allowed women the space to reshape and articulate their own militant identities and experiences of war, but in order to gain a degree of visibility in the radical and public press, women had to negotiate their presence within patriarchal frameworks. Pursuing representation within resistance organisations, Irish and Spanish militant women found that their presence was tolerated only when they were seen as symbolic figures of exceptional, preferably martyred women, or redefined within narratives of domestic femininity. Negotiating between these two axes, women’s militant visibility was thus entangled with the erasure of the broader role of women in war and resistance movements, whose participation was realigned with the domestic sphere and subsequently discounted by male-dominated resistance leaders.

Women’s photographic practices built an alternative way of seeing war that aimed to actively disrupt and recalibrate mainstream, public narratives. However, their disruptive narrative largely did not rupture the masculine mythologies of war, and women’s inclusion in these narratives remained largely symbolic. While women’s militant visibility in the immediate post-conflict period was subsumed into gendered paradigms of dissident and resistance movements, they would leverage the commemorative landscape surrounding the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Easter Rising and the Spanish Civil War to once more challenge their erasure. Commemorations of war allow us reflect on which experiences are remembered, and which have been marginalised and forgotten. In the 1960s and 1980s, militant women used the renewed interest in revolution and war to publish testimonies of their experiences. These memoirs used photographs to authenticate their memories and place themselves into the visual legacy of war, not as symbolic icons but as equal participants. These represented a significant intervention in state narratives of war, published openly rather than in clandestine papers or circulated through radical networks, yet their memories of war were ultimately overshadowed by the dominance of the patriarchal, state narrative, as they did not fit into the dominant frames, or cultural scripts, of war.<sup>509</sup> While these narratives and pockets of defiant

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<sup>508</sup> Labanyi, ‘The Languages of Silence’, p. 26. As she argues, silence has multiple meanings- it can derive from fear or defiance, it can demonstrate an acceptance or complicity with repression or it can act as a way to safeguard oneself from an intrusive state.

<sup>509</sup> Ann Rigney has written on the difficulties of recognition outside of cultural scripts of war, arguing that as dominant narratives emerge within public memory, people who do not fit into those frameworks are rendered inert, despite the existence of archival evidence and their own personal recollections. Ann Rigney, ‘Remaking Memory and the Agency of the Aesthetic’, *Memory Studies*, 14.1 (2021), 10-23.

visibility may not have substantively altered the patriarchal narratives of war at the time, they laid a critical foundation for later generations of activist women and feminist historians to take continue their work. In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist historians across Ireland and Spain, including Margaret Ward, Mary Nash, and Giuliana di Febo, used these memoirs and women's archival materials to re-appraise their role in war, sparking new understandings of gender and war. Since the 2000s, these testimonies, and the photographs within them, have received new levels of circulation as they have been republished and integrated into the wider narrative of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War.

Considering the contemporary impacts of these narratives, however, exposes a different problem—the question of *how* these marginalised histories have been distorted and severed from wider narratives of women's militancy as they have been recovered into the cultural memory of war. The analysis of women's vernacular photographic practices in post-conflict Ireland and Spain has revealed how women continually defied the patriarchal gendered order to construct their own counter-narratives of war that foregrounded and preserved their own histories of war and resistance. Yet, while feminist historians have used these counter-narratives to re-write masculine-dominated histories of war, contemporary public commemorative narratives have omitted women's own histories of defiance. Instead, they have developed narratives of modern rediscovery that discounts and discredits the continuous effort of militant women in maintaining their own memories, as well as overlooking the role of activist women and feminist historians in drawing attention to these women in the late twentieth century. In the next chapter, I interrogate how militant women have been recovered and integrated into contemporary, commemorative narratives of war in Ireland and Spain through iconic photographs of women that have been situated within celebratory narratives of erasure and recovery.

## Chapter 4

### Rediscovering Militant Women: Iconic Photographs and the Cultural Memory of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War in the Twenty-First Century

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, there has been a significant shift in the cultural memory of war in Ireland and Spain. As I have explored in the previous chapters, the post-conflict Irish and Spanish governments constructed a patriarchal memory landscape, anchored by official commemorations of male leaders, heroes and martyrs in public celebrations, memorials, and monuments, while the participation of women was neglected and excluded. Photography was critical to building this masculine lens of war. In Ireland, photographs of the martyred leaders of the Easter Rising were commodified into religious Mass cards and other memorabilia, while in Spain, the Francoist dictatorship used photographs of Nationalist soldiers to build a heroic mythos surrounding the civil war.<sup>510</sup> However, building on the momentum of militant women's memory activism from the 1960s onwards, and growth of the women's history in Irish and Spanish academia, the twenty-first century has seen representations of militant women re-enter the public narrative of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War. Photographs of militant women, published in books such as Liz Gillis' *Women of the Irish Revolution* or public exhibitions such as María José Turrión García's *Milicianas*, have been used to recover the supposedly hidden histories of gender and conflict in Ireland and Spain.<sup>511</sup> These photographs are alluring to the viewer, promising an undeniable trace of women's presence that celebrates women's rediscovery while overlooking the processes of their erasure. Yet, examining these photographs solely as images can only offer a selective, two-dimensional view of the past, a vision of the past determined by the gaze of the photographer. Looking deeper into these photograph and their histories, we are confronted by several questions: who are these women and why is it only now their experiences have been publicly recognised? Who took these images and where did they circulate prior to their modern rediscovery? Finally, what are the implications of using photography as a tool to rediscover militant women, and who remains unseen within these celebratory narratives of recovery?

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<sup>510</sup> Carville, 'Dusty Fingers of Time', p. 240; Holguín, pp. 1415-6.

<sup>511</sup> Liz Gillis, *Women of the Irish Revolution 1913-1923: A Photographic History*, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2014); María José Turrión García, *Milicianas* (Seville: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 2016). The term 'hidden histories' is a problematic one as it neutralises the often deliberate act of erasure that prevented women, and other marginalised peoples, histories from entering the public sphere.

In this chapter, I address these questions through an examination of the contemporary afterlives of two photographs of militant women that have become icons of war in Ireland and Spain. Within the most recent commemorations of war in Ireland and Spain, surrounding the centenary and 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary respectively of each conflict, two photographs dominated public discussions surrounding women's experiences of war. In Ireland, a photograph of the Irish militant Elizabeth O'Farrell was used to signify the deliberate erasure of women from Irish history, demonstrated by the apparent editing of O'Farrell out of this image when it was first published in 1916. In Spain, the German photographer Juan Guzmán's photograph of a teenage militiawoman taken in 1936 has been re-interpreted as evidence of women's revolutionary empowerment during the war. Both of these photographs have taken on a new afterlife in twenty-first century commemorations of war, and they have been used to shape the newfound cultural memory of women's participation in the Irish and Spanish conflicts. Public discourse surrounding these images in the press and official commemorations has focused on celebrating their modern re-emergence, however in this chapter, I step back to examine the full trajectory of these photographs from war to the present day: historicising their initial production, following their journeys and movements from when they were supposedly forgotten, and interrogating how they were recovered into the public gaze. In tracing the histories of these photographs and connecting this to their contemporary usage, I challenge the foundational assumption of disappearance that is frequently naturalised within women's history, and I demonstrate how the focus on integrating these images into celebratory narratives of rediscovery has obscured their rich histories of defiance and activism.<sup>512</sup> Contrary to the axiomatic belief that visibility inherently confers empowerment onto the subject, I argue that the pursuit of uncritical visibility can often perpetuate a process of erasure, wherein a selective minority of women are recognised while the majority remain in the historical shadow.<sup>513</sup>

Photographs are critical in mediating cultural memory; however, within public discourse surrounding the re-emergence of these supposedly forgotten images, they are understood as static vessels for memory, rather than as representational modes that *produce* memory.<sup>514</sup> They are used within what Astrid Erll describes as mnemonic practices—such as

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<sup>512</sup> Jean Allman, 'The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism, and the 'Tyrannies of History', *Journal of Women's History*, 21.3 (2009), 13-35, pp. 15-6.

<sup>513</sup> Joan Scott's work on gender and feminist visibility clearly highlight the concerns within an approach centred on uncritical visibility, see: Scott, 'The Evidence of Experience', p. 778 and Joan Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 24.

<sup>514</sup> Olga Shevchenko, *Double Exposure: Memory and Photography* (New Brunswick: Trasniantion Publishers, 2014), p. 6. Further studies on the relations between memory and photography can be found in: Marita Sturken, *Tangled*

public commemorations, monuments, and cultural media—to construct shared narratives of cultural memory that are intimately connected to the power dynamics of contemporary society.<sup>515</sup> Viewed through this prism, the glossy, iconic photographs of Irish and Spanish militant women reproduced throughout contemporary commemorations of war in fact ambiguously re-insert women into a totalising, patriarchal narrative of war, rather than recover the hidden history of women's presence in conflict.<sup>516</sup> The public prominence of these fragmentary representations of women's militancy is further problematic in terms of how they shape public understanding of militant women. Firstly, the place of these photographs within contemporary commemorations of war transforms these women into symbols of revolutionary womanhood, thereby removing any nuance from the dynamics of their own participation and their agency as historical actors. Adopted into patriarchal narratives, they become stable symbols onto which new narratives are intermittently imposed.<sup>517</sup> Secondly, the focus on iconic images, often taken by male photographers, continues to limit our understanding of women's militancy, framing it within a masculine gaze that maintains patriarchal definitions of militancy while overlooking the complexity through which militant women understood their experiences. While these photographs aim to offer a new vision of women's militancy, they maintain a patriarchal narrative that deliberately marginalises women whose experience of war does not fit into the established narratives of wartime femininity; a continuation of the processes of erasure I have discussed throughout this thesis.

Following through on this aim of problematising the reductive rhetoric of visibility as a panacea for historical neglect, in my first case study, I deconstruct the mythology of Elizabeth O'Farrell, the 'forgotten woman' of Irish revolutionary history who is most well-known for being supposedly edited out of a photograph of the surrender of the Irish rebels in April 1916. In this photograph, shot by an unknown British soldier, only O'Farrell's boots were visible in the photograph when it was first published in the British press in 1916. In the wake of the centenary of the Easter Rising, a commemoration dedicated to re-locating the marginalised experiences of women, O'Farrell's photograph was rediscovered and publicly circulated as a literal example of the historical erasure that faced Irish women in the twentieth-

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*Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2001); Nina Lager Vesterberg, 'Photography as Cultural Memory: Imag(in)ing France in the 1950s', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 5.2 (2005), 75-90; Annette Kuhn, 'Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration', *Visual Studies*, 22.3 (2007), 283-92.

<sup>515</sup> Erll, *Cultural Memory Studies*, p. 2.

<sup>516</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, p. 2. See also, Pichel, p. 10.

<sup>517</sup> Maeve Casserly, 'Exhibiting Éire: Representations of Women in the Easter Rising Centenary Commemorations' in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*, ed. by Oona Frawley (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2021), pp. 220-41, (p. 234).

century. However, historicising this photograph reveals that this narrative of erasure and modern rediscovery is more complex than it first appears. O'Farrell deliberately stepped out of frame, and in addition, she was only edited out of the photograph by one publication, and she leveraged her barely-visible presence in this photograph to affirm her presence in the post-conflict revolutionary narrative. By following the trajectory of this photograph through the mainstream press, women's archives, and public memorials, I argue that reductive narratives of historical erasure and contemporary rediscovery eclipse the subversive histories of defiance and negotiation that is found under the surface of these photographs.

While O'Farrell is famed for her photographic erasure, the subject of my second case study, the Catalan Communist militant Marina Ginestà, is known because of her rediscovery through photography. Originally shot in 1936, the photograph of Ginestà has become an icon of the Spanish Civil War since its initial publication in 2002, due to its appeal as an image that compressed the complexities of women's revolutionary participation into a singular, emotive snapshot. In 2008, the documentarian Xulio Garcia Bilbao identified the anonymous militant woman in the image as the 17-year-old Communist Ginestà, and since then, the image has exploded in popularity. However, the focus on this photograph as a celebratory moment of rediscovery overshadows the troubling questions over the history of this image and its role in maintaining the mythology of the combative *militiana*. By tracing the original production of this photograph, resituating it within the photographer's wider corpus, and interrogating the contemporary afterlives of this image in Spain and beyond, I will problematise how this photograph has been used as a superficial signifier of women's empowerment and presence during conflict. In doing so, I reveal how, contrary to popular opinion, the re-emergence of these images does not substantively disrupt patriarchal narratives of war, but in many ways actually reinforces it.

Within the realm of cultural memory, the continual dissemination of iconic photographs creates 'the only story that can be told'.<sup>518</sup> Yet, the visual content of an image alone cannot shape new memories of war; instead, remembrance is generated through how the public interact with these images and their role within the existing commemorative landscape.<sup>519</sup> As such, it is essential to interrogate the narratives constructed through these photographs, questioning how the women captured within these photographs have been continuously redefined and neglected, and to examine which histories these photographs tell and which

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<sup>518</sup> Riggs, p. 5.

<sup>519</sup> Guy Beiner, *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 33.

they conceal. As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, photographs contain a myriad of multi-layered narratives that broaden and enrich our understanding of gender and war. By placing the case studies of the iconic photographs of Elizabeth O'Farrell and Marina Ginestà into dialogue, I aim to demonstrate how examining these photographs as objects with their own embodied history and social biography, rather than solely focusing on their iconic afterlives, allows us to identify the disruptive potential held within these photographs. In doing so, we can bring the complex histories of militant women's negotiations between erasure and visibility during the war and post-war periods into focus.

#### 4.1 Rectifying Historical Wrongs? Deconstructing the Rediscovery of Elizabeth O'Farrell during the Centenary of the Easter Rising, 2016



**Figure 4.3**, Sinéad Guckian, 'Her Surrender', painting, 2021, Dublin. Courtesy of the Independent.

In 2021, the Irish Seanad unveiled a painting of the Cumann na mBan militant Elizabeth O'Farrell, seen in Figure 4.3, to mark International Women's Day.<sup>520</sup> Sinéad

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<sup>520</sup> Seanan Molony, 'Painting of Woman Airbrushed from GPO Rising Surrender Unveiled in Seanad to Mark International Women's Day', *Independent*, 8 March 2021, <<https://www.independent.ie/news/painting-of-woman-airbrushed-from-gpo-rising-surrender-unveiled-in-seanad-to-mark-international-womens-day-40172047.html>> (accessed 10 October 2021).

Guckian's painting, titled 'Her Surrender', recreated the iconic photograph taken during the rebels' surrender of the Easter Rising but she flipped the perspective, reframing Elizabeth O'Farrell, the woman who had negotiated the delivery of the surrender terms, as the focal point of the piece. The Cathaoirleach (Chairperson) of the Seanad, Mark Daly, praised the painting for rectifying the historical wrong done to O'Farrell, and highlighted it as a way of combatting her erasure from the historical narrative. Yet, while this painting has been celebrated for drawing attention to O'Farrell's role in the Rising, this way of making O'Farrell visible in fact silences her further. Guckian's painting reflects the myth that O'Farrell was deliberately airbrushed out of the photograph capturing the surrender, however her own account contradicts this narrative. In fact, she deliberately moved out of shot.<sup>521</sup> This defiance is not represented in the painting, however, which positions O'Farrell submissively looking down at the ground, a powerless figure in the face of the two British soldiers standing tall in front of O'Farrell and rebel leader Patrick Pearse. The visibility entailed by 'Her Surrender' reincorporates O'Farrell into the revolutionary narrative, but it replicates a colonial, patriarchal gaze that O'Farrell sought to avoid and it removes her agency in choosing to remain unseen.<sup>522</sup> The demand to make women visible has been a key mandate within contemporary commemorations of war in Ireland, but 'Her Surrender' highlights that we should instead seek to understand how and why women are made visible, and consider what remains unseen within these celebrations of women's newfound visibility.<sup>523</sup>

Gender and the marginalisation of women's experiences in revolutionary Ireland has been a key focal point throughout the Decade of Centenaries. While women have played critical roles as 'curators of memory' in previous commemorations, including driving the first series of commemorations of the Easter Rising from 1917 onwards and organising the first official exhibition on the rebellion in 1932, their own experiences of war had previously been excluded from these celebrations.<sup>524</sup> As Roisín Higgins has argued, in the early stages of the post-conflict period, public commemoration was critical to defining the nation and in particular, reinforcing the patriarchal gendered order that had been disturbed by women's active participation in war and revolution.<sup>525</sup> In the 1920s, the public memorialisation of the

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<sup>521</sup> McAuliffe, 'Remembered for Being Forgotten', p. 32.

<sup>522</sup> Hayes, p. 522.

<sup>523</sup> Allman, p. 24.

<sup>524</sup> Higgins, 'Curators of Memory', p. 211. For example, in the first years after the Easter Rising, they led commemorations and protests, and in 1932, Nellie Gifford organised the first official exhibition on the Easter Rising and built up the National Museum's Easter Rising collection using the network of contacts cultivated through her own activism.

<sup>525</sup> Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p. 19.

past re-shaped the Rising into a purely masculine narrative, reflecting the desire of the Irish Free State government to redefine its present within traditional, Catholic ideologies of gender.<sup>526</sup> In later decades, a minority of women were permitted to enter the commemorative narrative, but only within specific, delineated categories: Constance Markievicz, as the sole female rebel, Grace Gifford Plunkett, as the tragic bride of executed leader Joseph Plunkett, Margaret Pearse, as the Virgin Mary-esque suffering mother. The Decade of Centenaries, launched in 2012, sought to challenge this by explicitly focusing on the marginalised and disenfranchised voices of women—though, this attempt to construct a pluralistic narrative has revealed the underlying tensions and contradictions of commemoration.<sup>527</sup> The entangled dynamics of remembrance and erasure came to a fore during the 2016 centenary of the Easter Rising, where the objective of the state commemorations was to remember the supposedly forgotten women of 1916, in order to elide the role the Irish state played in erasing and disenfranchising these women.<sup>528</sup> At the same time as the Irish state celebrated its rediscovery of women, the legacies of gendered violence during the revolutionary period, the post-war political and social marginalisation of women, and the decades of government policy that denied women's autonomy and punished them continued to be overlooked and denied.<sup>529</sup> It remains to be seen if the reminder of the Decade of Centenaries, which will cover the divisive Irish Civil War, will ensure that the shameful aspects of Ireland's past are not forgotten or erased.

Within the Decade of Centenaries, the supposed rediscovery of Elizabeth O'Farrell, the Cumann na mBan militant who participated in the 1916 Easter Rising and delivered the rebel's notice of surrender to the British forces, best embodied the entangled dynamics of visibility, erasure and remembrance within the recovery of women's experiences of the Irish revolutionary period. In 2016, the story of Elizabeth O'Farrell captured widespread public attention as an example of how women were deliberately erased from the historical narrative. In O'Farrell's case, this was a literal case of erasure, as it was alleged that a photograph taken of the surrender of the Easter Rising deliberately erased her presence as it was reprinted across

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<sup>526</sup> Higgins, 'Curators of Memory', p. 213.

<sup>527</sup> For example, the announcement of the Abbey Theatre's all-male artistic programme 'Waking the Nation', designed to celebrate the centenary of the Easter Rising, provoked widespread outrage and resulted in the founding of the protest movement Waking the Feminists, which interrogated gendered imbalances in the Irish arts sector and demanded redress to these institutional inequalities. For a detailed examination of this see: Brenda O'Connell, 'Waking the Feminists: Gender Counts', in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*, ed. by Oona Frawley (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2021), p. 242-66.

<sup>528</sup> Casserly, 'Exhibiting Éire', p. 222.

<sup>529</sup> Linda Connolly, 'Honest Commemoration: Reconciling Women's "Troubled" and "Troubling" History in Centennial Ireland' in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*, ed. by Oona Frawley (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2021), pp. 300-14, (p. 313).

the British and Irish press. This accusation of airbrushing became a central issue within public discourse surrounding the commemoration of the Easter Rising, and O'Farrell became emblematic of the wider issue of women's exclusion.<sup>530</sup> Yet, as Mary McAuliffe has argued, it is the mythologisation of O'Farrell, rather than this act of photographic erasure, that has most effectively airbrushed the complex histories of women in the Easter Rising.<sup>531</sup>

Born in 1884 to a working-class family in Dublin, from her youth O'Farrell had been an active member of suffrage, nationalist, and socialist organizations.<sup>532</sup> As a member of Cumann na mBan, she was active throughout the duration of the Easter Rising. At its start, she delivered dispatches to rebel units in the west of Ireland before returning to Dublin where she joined up with socialist and Irish Citizen Army leader James Connolly and his battalion in the General Post Office (GPO). She continued to act as a courier delivering messages and ammunitions across Dublin, as well as providing auxiliary duties and first aid to the soldiers in the GPO, highlighting once more the diverse scope of women's militancy during the revolutionary period.<sup>533</sup> On the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1916, with the arrival of reinforcements for the British Army, O'Farrell was asked to deliver terms of surrender to the British forces on behalf of the rebellion.<sup>534</sup> Carrying a white flag and wearing the insignia of the Red Cross to protect herself from enemy fire, O'Farrell ventured across the active warzone of the city to deliver the surrender notice. Initially, she was captured and accused of espionage, before she appealed to Brigadier General Lowe of the British Army and conveyed him the offer of surrender.<sup>535</sup> She remained the messenger for the entirety of the negotiation process, couriering messages back and forth between the British army base and the various garrisons of the Irish rebels until finally she and Patrick Pearse journeyed to Moore Street to surrender officially. An unknown British soldier captured this moment on his box-held camera and immortalised O'Farrell as the woman that Irish history forgot.

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<sup>530</sup> Hannah Smyth and Diego Ramirez Echavarria, 'Twitter and Feminist Commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising', *Journal of Digital History*, 1 (2022), n.p.

<sup>531</sup> McAuliffe, 'Remembered for Being Forgotten', p. 33. While Elizabeth O'Farrell is mentioned in a number of works dealing with gender and the Irish Revolution, Mary McAuliffe's chapter 'Remembered for Being Forgotten' most thoroughly examines the mythologisation of O'Farrell within the commemorative narratives of the revolution.

<sup>532</sup> Sinéad McCole, *Easter Widows: Seven Irish Women Who Lived in the Shadow of 1916* (Dublin: Doublesday, 2015), p. 238; Miriam Haughton, "'Them the Breaks': #WakingTheFeminists and Staging the Easter/Estrogen Rising', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 28.3 (2018), 345-54, p. 349.

<sup>533</sup> McCole, *Guns and Chiffon*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>534</sup> Michael T. Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising* (Stroud: The History Press, 1999), p. 284.

<sup>535</sup> Lucy McDiarmuid, *At Home in the Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), p. 109.



**Figure 4.4,** Unknown, 'The Surrender of Patrick Pearse', 1916.  
Courtesy of National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

Copies of the negative were widely distributed across the British press, but the soldier sold the original negative of the surrender to Joseph Cashman, a journalist then working for the photo-engraving department of the moderate nationalist *Freeman's Journal* who would go on to lead the photographic department of the *Irish Press* from 1929-1942.<sup>536</sup> Figure 4.4 was a reproduction of this negative, and it depicted four figures standing in the centre of the frame, dwarfed by the buildings and signs of war around them, distanced from and apparently unaware of the gaze of the camera. On the left of the frame, Brigadier General William Lowe and his son John Lowe stand facing the rebel leader Pearse, the faces of all three men indistinct and unreadable. Partially unseen, Elizabeth O'Farrell is stood beside Pearse, obscured by the angle of the shot with only her boots and the hem of her skirt visible in the image. These traces of feminine presence, seen and yet not seen, became a prominent

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<sup>536</sup> Dublin, RTÉ Archive, Joseph Cashman Collection 0510/061. See also: Louis McRedmond, *Ireland: The Revolutionary Years: Photographs from the Cashman Collection* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan and Radio Telefís Éireann, 1992).

metaphor for the presence of women within the revolutionary narrative, as women's revolutionary participation was systematically undermined and denied in the aftermath of war.<sup>537</sup> However, the mythologisation surrounding O'Farrell relies on her being edited out of the photography, rather than simply hidden by the angle of the camera. Despite its now iconic status, the surrender photograph was initially not widely circulated. Only two tabloid newspapers, the *Daily Sketch* and the *Daily Mirror*, both known for their sensational use of photography, reproduced the negative seen in Figure 4.4. The accusations of airbrushing arose from how the *Daily Sketch*, a London-based conservative tabloid, edited the image prior to publishing it as the front cover of its 16<sup>th</sup> May issue, which can be seen below in Figure 4.5.<sup>538</sup>



Figure 4.5, Unknown, 'Irish Rebel Chief's Surrender', *Daily Sketch*, 19 May 1916, London. Courtesy of World Digital Library.

Comparing Figure 4.4 and 4.5, the clearest difference between the two images is the removal of O'Farrell's skirt and boots, most likely using masking fluid. While contemporary commentary has focused solely on how O'Farrell was edited out of the photograph, the image

<sup>537</sup> Laura McAtackney, 'Public Memory, Conflict and Women: Commemoration in Contemporary Ireland', in *Making Histories*, ed. by Paul Ashto, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 99-113, (pp. 102-3).

<sup>538</sup> The Daily Sketch (1909-1971) was a daily tabloid newspaper which described itself as 'London's Premier Picture Paper', focusing on photographic reporting, personality stories and gossip. Ryan Linkof, *Public Images: Celebrity Photojournalism and the Making of the Tabloid Press* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), p. 31.

as a whole was retouched, with the graininess and shadowed lighting of the original negative flattened into unbroken brightness, the uniforms of the British officers made clearer, and the expressions of the men, indecipherable in Figure 4.4, brought into focus. This created an effect of illustrative, hyperreality where certain features were solidified by diminishing others.<sup>539</sup> Examining the image in its entirety, and comparing it to the similar retouching performed on the other photos on the cover, suggests that the removal of O'Farrell's feet was not a deliberate act of malice, but an aesthetic decision to clarify the photograph.

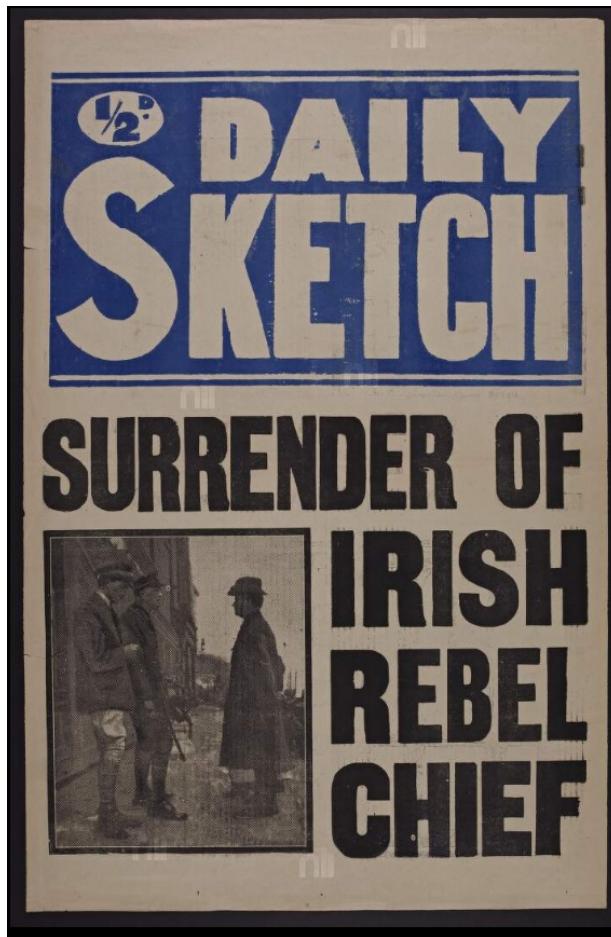
Nevertheless, this act has subsequently come to symbolise the deliberate erasure of women from the historical record. The ghostly figure of O'Farrell, present and yet unable to be seen, has been described by Sarah Durcan as an 'insolable memory, a memory that persists within a well of forgetting'.<sup>540</sup> When placed in dialogue, Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5 seemingly demonstrated a clear narrative of deliberate erasure, and the resurgence of these images in the context of the Decade of Centenaries mobilised them as part of a practice of defiant remembrance. Yet, this mythological narrative of photographic airbrushing and modern remembrance imposed its own erasure on O'Farrell, as it firstly elides her own agency in stepping out of frame, and secondly, omits the role of O'Farrell and other militant women in negotiating their own representation in the Irish revolutionary narrative and constructing their own memorials. Furthermore, this narrative is complicated when we consider the other versions of the photograph published on that same day in May 1916.

The negative in Figure 4.4 was reproduced twice more that day: once for the broadside poster of the *Daily Sketch*, which advertised the day's main news, and again in an issue of the *Daily Mirror*. The broadside poster, seen in Figure 4.6 below, uses the photograph to illustrate the caption 'Surrender of Irish Rebel Chief'. The image is more grainy and darker than the edited version published in the 10<sup>th</sup> May issue, and O'Farrell's feet remain in the image, but her presence is not remarked on in the headline. Though physically present in the photograph, she is not recognised within the masculine narrative of war constructed by the *Daily Sketch*. Figure 4.7 differs from this trend, as its halftone reproduction in its 10<sup>th</sup> May issue not only maintains O'Farrell's presence, it also draws attention to her within the caption: 'He [Pearse] was accompanied by a woman as a safeguard, and her apron can just be discerned'.

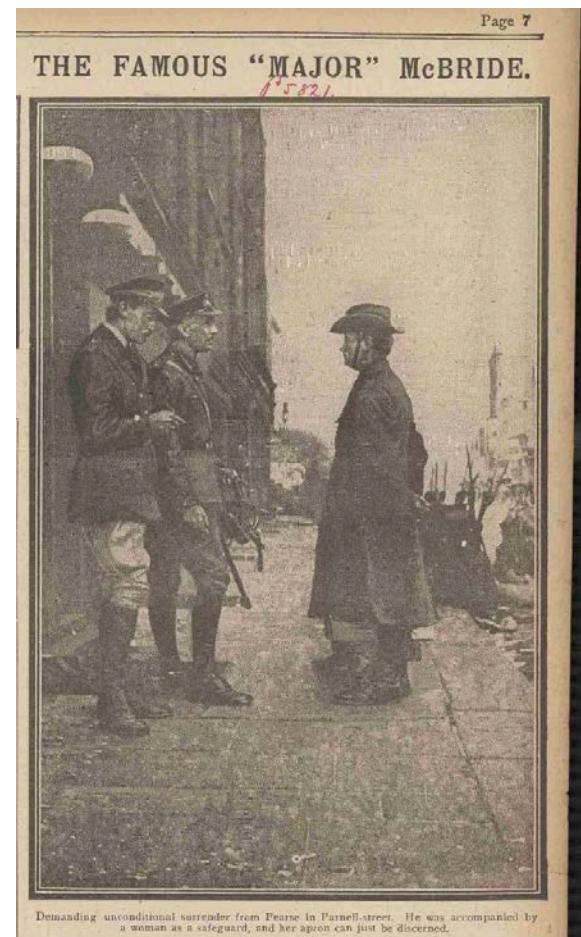
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<sup>539</sup> Christopher Pinney describes the hyperreality of photographs in his examination of colonial Indian studio photography, using it as an example of how photographic technologies of montage and overpainting were used to produce a hyperreality that evoked the aesthetic of religious and memorial images. Christopher Pinney, *Camera India* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), pp. 138–40. For more on Irish photography and hyperreality, see Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, p. 79.

<sup>540</sup> Sarah Durcan, *Memory and Intermediality in Artists' Moving Image* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), p. 235.



**Figure 4.6**, Broadsheet Poster of *Daily Sketch*, 'Irish Rebel Chief's Surrender', 10 May 1916, London. Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.



**Figure 4.7**, *Daily Mirror*, 'The Famous "Major" McBride', 10 May 1916, London. Courtesy of British Newspaper Archives.

Paralleling the editing process in the *Daily Sketch*, the uniforms and faces of the men in the photo have been lightened, the editor juxtaposing the nonchalant pride and the neat, official uniforms of the British officers with Pearse's stoic demeanour and civilian attire. In the British press, therefore, the presence of O'Farrell was not explicitly erased, but her role in the surrender was dismissed and diminished. Rather than an active participant, she was recast as a passive bystander, a role that reflected the gendered attitudes towards war and women's participation in conflict.

From historicising this photograph, it is clear that the mythology of erasure surrounding O'Farrell is more complex than it appears. While O'Farrell's photographic presence was subjected to a patriarchal gaze that did not recognise her as legitimate revolutionary, her removal from the press coverage of the surrender reflects the dominant mind-set within the British press, rather than a singular act of erasure. What is erased within these accounts, however, is O'Farrell's own decision to step out of frame. In an interview with

*An Fiolar*, published by the Cistercian monks in Roscrea in 1958, O'Farrell discussed the photograph and contextualised the shot:

She told us that when she saw a British soldier getting ready to take the photo, she stepped back beside Pearse so as not to give the enemy press any satisfaction. Ever after she regretted having done so.<sup>541</sup>

In a split-second decision, O'Farrell defied the soldier's external gaze and maintained her own control over how she was seen. By the external gaze, I refer to the concept of the gaze as a way of looking at women that is entwined with colonial, patriarchal power dynamics which distort and stigmatise the women being looked at.<sup>542</sup> O'Farrell thus used photographic absence as a means of defiance, a tactic later copied by Irish women imprisoned during the civil war.<sup>543</sup> Photography allowed militant women to articulate their agency as rebels and defy the male gaze of their political opponents. Rather than framing the surrender photograph within a linear narrative of erasure and contemporary rediscovery, I argue that it is critical to recognise O'Farrell's agency in choosing to be unseen and incorporate this into our discussion of the image. Through this, we move away from the demand for uncritical visibility and instead recognise photographic absence as a space to 'negotiate the difficult conditions of social and gendered existence'.<sup>544</sup>

In contrast to its contemporary relevance, Figure 4.4 was not widely circulated in the Irish press during the revolutionary period—though, this was not evidence of O'Farrell's lack of presence. In the years after the Rising, O'Farrell leveraged her role as the negotiator of the surrender to assert her place in the historical narrative, contributing to republican periodicals and openly writing letters to the editor that challenged misinformation in mainstream newspapers. Her authority in this derived from her first, published account of the surrender in the *Catholic Bulletin*. As the *Catholic Bulletin* redefined the Rising within an almost exclusively masculine mythology, O'Farrell's article was one of a fraction of accounts by women in the newspaper. Like the women of *An Phoblacht* and the *Mujeres Antifascistas Españolas*, O'Farrell asserted her subversive experiences of militancy whilst navigating the gendered dynamics of

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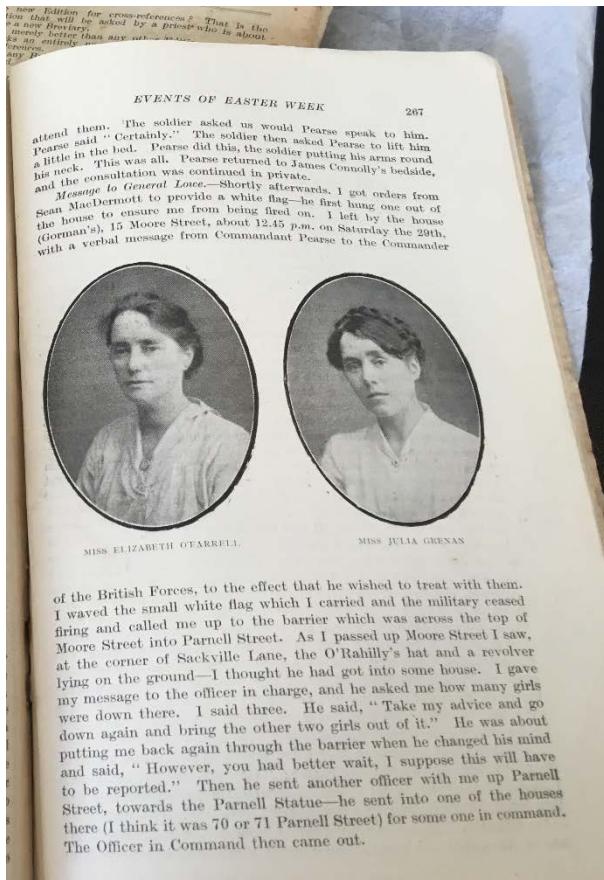
<sup>541</sup> *An Fiolar*, quoted in McAuliffe, 'Remembered for Being Forgotten', p. 32.

<sup>542</sup> As I discussed earlier in the introduction to this thesis in reference to Laura Mulvey, photography mediates the external gaze of the spectator, which shapes and objectifies the subject within racialised, gendered or colonialist narratives and imaginaries. For more see: Ae-Ryung Kim, 'Resisting the Power of the Gendered Gaze: Metonymic Self-Description through Digital Photography', *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 18.4 (2012), 45-70; Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 101; Ilya Parkins, 'Becoming in the Eyes of Others: The Relational Gaze in Boudoir Photography', in *Revisiting the Gaze: The Fashioned Body and the Politics of Looking*, ed. by Morna Laing and Jacki Wilson (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 101-22.

<sup>543</sup> For my discussion on this, see Chapter 3, pp. 143-6.

<sup>544</sup> Hayes, p. 522.

Irish nationalism, which is clear throughout both the text and the photographs that illustrate it. She consciously framed women's active involvement in rebellion within conventionally domestic and feminine modes of engagement, such as nursing injured soldiers and providing domestic and auxiliary aid. Further to this, she omitted details of her treatment by the British army, who threatened and strip-searched her, toning down her account to ensure it could be published without complaint.<sup>545</sup>



**Figure 4.8**, Elizabeth O'Farrell, 'Events of Easter Week', Catholic Bulletin, April 1917, Dublin, p. 267.

Her choice of photographs to accompany the piece underlined this redefinition of women's militancy within binary gendered norms; rather than the revolutionary portraiture taken by Cumann na mBan women, O'Farrell illustrates her account with two studio portraits of herself and Julia Grenan, her partner who was also present at the Rising. Yet, this article also demonstrates how O'Farrell covertly subverted these gendered dynamics of Irish nationalism and negotiated a place for herself and her fellow members of Cumann na mBan in the narrative of the revolution. Throughout the article, O'Farrell continuously refers to the actions and roles of other women by name, avoiding the generic language of 'Cumann na mBan girls' that pervaded throughout male-written texts. Furthermore, her use of studio

<sup>545</sup> For a thorough analysis of O'Farrell's account of the surrender see McDiarmuid, pp. 108-13.

photography draws comparison not with the explicitly domestic photographs of other women in the *Catholic Bulletin*, who as Orla Fitzpatrick has examined were defined through their relation with executed male relatives, but with the photographs of male soldiers and rebels.<sup>546</sup> In twentieth-century Ireland, studio photography was used to establish the respectability of its subjects, and by using this genre of image, O'Farrell seemed to be pre-emptively projecting an image of legitimacy onto her militancy, reinforcing that Irish women's militancy was a respectable endeavour in spite of the transgressive nature of their participation.<sup>547</sup> After stepping out of shot during the surrender, O'Farrell remained determined to control how she was seen.

The *Catholic Bulletin*'s inclusion of O'Farrell's account of the surrender was crucial in allowing O'Farrell to assert agency over her position in the revolutionary narrative, including denying permission for authors and journalists to publish her account. In 1917, for example, O'Farrell refused to allow the writer Katharine Tynan to use her account of the Easter Rising in a book she was writing on Irish politics. Tynan, a moderate nationalist and Parnellite who had embraced a British, middle-class identity, opposed the Easter Rising as a distraction against the war effort, and was connected to the continuing role of the British state in Ireland through her husband Henry Hinkson's position as a magistrate in the West of Ireland.<sup>548</sup> In response to Tynan's request, O'Farrell wrote back that 'I am afraid I cannot accord your permission to use my story. Considering your attitude of late towards Irish affairs, I am surprised that you should think of writing upon the subject at all'.<sup>549</sup> While O'Farrell was willing to negotiate and redefine her experiences within the gendered frameworks of the revolutionary narrative, it is clear from her interactions with Tynan that she wanted to retain control over how she was presented, a continuation of how she defied the gaze of the soldier's camera during the moment of surrender.

Throughout the post-war period, O'Farrell republished her account across different publications, including republican periodicals such as the *Wolfe Tone Annual*, *An Phoblacht*, mainstream newspapers such as the *Irish Press*, and radical papers such as *Irish Workers Voice*. Like many other republican women, she used her status as a veteran to correct misinformation and assert her own role in the revolutionary narrative, and it was in this context that Figure 4.4

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<sup>546</sup> Fitzpatrick, p. 83.

<sup>547</sup> For a thorough discussion on Irish studio photography and the cultivation of a middle-class aesthetic, see Hanna, pp. 73-6.

<sup>548</sup> Aurelia L.S Annat, 'Class, Nation, Gender and Self: Katharine Tynan and the Construction of Political Identities, 1880-1930', in *Politics, Society and the Middle Class in Modern Ireland*, ed. by Fintan Lane, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 194-211, (pp. 203-4)

<sup>549</sup> Dublin, National Library of Ireland, Elizabeth O'Farrell and Julia Grenan Papers, Manuscript 50R46 2/2.

re-entered the public narrative of the Easter Rising. In 1955, O'Farrell wrote to the magazine *Tatler* and criticised their account of the surrender, using her own article published in 1917 in the *Catholic Bulletin* as a way to substantiate her claims. In its next issue in December 1955, *Tatler* issued a correction to the article that explicitly mentioned O'Farrell's role in the revolution. They then received a response from a reader, John McAlpine, which they published in their January issue. This response by McAlpine corroborated O'Farrell's account and included a news clipping of Figure 4.4. *Tatler* published this image and noted that 'a closer examination reveals O'Farrell standing directly in line with him [Pearse] away from camera'. Notably, the photograph is used to substantiate O'Farrell's presence at the surrender, rather than as evidence of erasure.



Figure 4.9, Sunday Independent, 'Saw Pearse Surrender: nurse's Part in 1916 Rising', January 1956. National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

A year later in 1956, the *Sunday Independent* republished Figure 4.4 to highlight O'Farrell's participation in the Easter Rising. In an article entitled 'Saw Pearse Surrender: Nurse's Part in 1916 Rising', the surrender photograph paired with a more recent photograph of O'Farrell as an elderly woman illustrated a sensational account of O'Farrell's role in the Easter Rising. Published one year before her death, the article demonstrates that O'Farrell's role in the surrender was continually acknowledged, both in mainstream papers like the

*Independent* and in her own editorials and articles in the radical press. As McAuliffe has argued in her analysis of the narratives imposed on O'Farrell, within both these accounts O'Farrell's political militancy is excised from the narrative, and she is remade into the unthreatening figure of 'Nurse O'Farrell', who maintains the gendered memory of the Easter Rising.<sup>550</sup> Yet, even when framed in this symbolic role, O'Farrell remained present in the cultural memory of the Easter Rising, a fact that contradicts the dominant mythos of her as the 'forgotten woman' of Irish history.

This article is also notable for being the first to discuss the re-touching process in the surrender photograph, which was contrasted with a more recent photograph of O'Farrell as an older woman. The caption described how:

Pearse stood between the camera and Nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell and in a re-touching process her skirts which showed in the picture were made to appear as a greatcoat worn by Pearse, who, in fact presented a soldierly figure in a perfectly-tailored uniform.<sup>551</sup>

The 'wrong impression' given by the photograph is not that it erased O'Farrell, but rather that it made Pearse appear unsoldierly. Within the immediate post-war period, O'Farrell's role in the remembrance of the Easter Rising was more complex than erasure. Like many other militant women, she negotiated her presence in the narrative within the gendered dynamics of Irish nationalism, using the press to advocate both for her own role, and the wider role of women, within the Easter Rising. The commemorative narrative developed in 2016 of O'Farrell as a forgotten woman obscures both her own agency in challenging erasure, and as I will now explore, the collective agency of women's activist networks that sought to memorialise O'Farrell's role within the revolution.

Throughout her life, O'Farrell remained a committed republican and she was an active part of the network of militant, veteran women who rejected the legitimacy of the Irish Free State.<sup>552</sup> After O'Farrell's death in 1957, she continued to be recognised in republican narratives of the revolution, but her established place within the state narrative of the Rising

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<sup>550</sup> McAuliffe, 'Remembered for Being Forgotten', p. 34.

<sup>551</sup> Newsclipping, NLI, MS 31,459/6 Florence O'Donoghue Papers.

<sup>552</sup> Matthews, pp. 234-5. Indeed, O'Farrell left Cumann na mBan in 1933 after the organisation voted to revise its constitution and remove the requirement for members to swear an oath of allegiance to the First Dáil (1919-1921) and Second Dáil (1921-1922), the revolutionary parliament of the Irish Republic elected during the War of Independence. This change prompted accusations from republican women such as Mary McSweeney and O'Farrell that Cumann na mBan was paying lip-service to supporting the 1916 Proclamation while ignoring the governments established by this proclamation.

was more fraught, with some commemorative collections published for the 1966 anniversary of the Easter Rising neglecting her role. For example, the 1966 Capuchin Annual, published by the Irish Capuchin Franciscans, reproduced Figure 4.4 but included no mention of O'Farrell, whose feet can be seen in the photograph.<sup>553</sup> Further to this, O'Farrell was misidentified as 'Agnes Farrell' in the issue, presumably a misremembered collation of O'Farrell and fellow Cumann na mBan militant Agnes Farrelly. In the face of this mistake, and the wider slippage of O'Farrell's from the public narrative of war, the responsibility of maintaining her memory and place in the revolutionary narrative fell to the post-war networks of militant women.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, across both Ireland and Spain, militant women used the radical press to commemorate and legitimise women's participation in war, with personal recollections, obituaries, and political editorials highlighting the importance of women within both the revolutionary movement and post-war dissident organisations.<sup>554</sup> This aspect of women's practices of memory activism has been under-analysed within Irish historical studies, as apart from significant work on diasporic memory by Síobhra Aiken and Dianne Hall, the commemorative role of republican women has predominantly been discussed in relation to how they tended to the memories of martyred male republicans.<sup>555</sup> O'Farrell's peers in Cumann na mBan and the republican movement played a critical role in tending to her place in the cultural memory of the revolution after her death, as they continued her work of correcting misinformation in the press and foregrounding women's participation in editorials and commemorative articles. Julia Grenan, O'Farrell's partner, was particularly important to maintaining O'Farrell's role in the narrative of the Easter Rising. She donated O'Farrell's original manuscript of her account of the Rising to a museum collecting 'items of the valiant men and women of Easter Week', and she petitioned the National Graves Association to officially recognise O'Farrell, who had initially been buried a distance away from the main republican plot in Glasnevin Cemetery.<sup>556</sup> Grenan then bought the plot adjoining the republican plot, exhuming O'Farrell from the original grave and reinterring her there with the express wish that she and O'Farrell would be buried together. In 1961, the National Graves Association agreed to her demands to honour O'Farrell and they erected a memorial cross in memory of the 'brave nurse'.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>553</sup> Capuchin Franciscan Order, 'The Surrender and After', *Capuchin Annual*, April 1966, p. 254.

<sup>554</sup> For more on this, see Chapter 3, pp. 123-31.

<sup>555</sup> Higgins, 'Curators of Memory', p. 211.

<sup>556</sup> NLI, Elizabeth O'Farrell and Julia Grenan Papers, newsclipping, MS50246, 15/8 and Letter to Julia Grenan from Brother Allen, MS50246, 12.

<sup>557</sup> NLI, Elizabeth O'Farrell and Julia Grenan Papers, newclipping, MS5026, 15/6.

In the lead up to the Golden Jubilee of the Easter Rising, public interest in the role of women in the revolution increased, paralleling the resurgence of public attention to women in contemporary commemorations in both Ireland and Spain. Aware of the opportunity that this attention held, a group of former Cumann na mBan women, including O'Farrell's partner Julia Grenan, formed the Elizabeth O'Farrell Memorial Committee in 1966. The actions of the Memorial Committee demonstrate how militant women worked collaboratively to commemorate the memories of republican women in an act of collective defiance against the patriarchal narrative of war constructed by the state during the 1966 Golden Jubilee of the Easter Rising.<sup>558</sup> The Elizabeth O'Farrell Memorial Committee organised events and fundraised in order to fund a commemorative plaque in the Holles Street Maternity Hospital in Dublin, where O'Farrell had trained as a midwife after the Easter Rising. They successfully raised enough funds to commission the plaque, sponsor a medal for the highest-achieving student nurse, and fund postgraduate research for nurses.<sup>559</sup> The Memorial Committee commissioned the sculptor Gerry Trimble to design the plaque, which was based on the studio photograph of O'Farrell published in the *Catholic Bulletin*. Underneath the plaque, an engraving described her service during the Easter Rising and her role as a midwife in the Maternity Hospital, highlighting O'Farrell's life beyond the frozen snapshot of the surrender.

Mainstream Irish newspapers widely reported on this ceremony, however, all of the reports drew greater attention to a separate commemoration of O'Farrell: the RTÉ documentary drama *Insurrection*, which had drawn renewed attention to her role in the revolt and surrender.<sup>560</sup> The presence of O'Farrell in the *Insurrection* almost eclipsed the sustained work of the Memorial Committee, who had been organising fundraising campaigns and liaising with the nursing and midwifery organisation for years before the documentary. The *Dubliner's Diary*, for example, described the impact of *Insurrection* on the remembrance of

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<sup>558</sup> Higgins, *Transforming 1916*, p. 83.

<sup>559</sup> UCD Archives, Sighle Humphry Papers P106/1541-1557, Dublin. See also Mark Loughrey, *A Century of Service: A History of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation, 1919-2019* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2019), pp. 162-3.

<sup>560</sup> *Insurrection*, scripted by Hugh Leonard, was one of the most elaborate productions created to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Easter Rising and it remains one of the most well-received productions of RTÉ. A mix of drama and humanistic documentary, it was a dramatized reconstruction of the events of the Easter Rising intermixed with newsroom reports by contemporary journalists and broadcasters. Screened over eight nights, it was notable for including the stories of the leaders of the rebellion, the ordinary participants, and women. Described as 'a memorial fashioned by people who cannot paint or sculpt', *Insurrection* was credited for highlighting the diverse roles played by nationalist women in Easter Week, most notably Elizabeth O'Farrell. Based on the primary accounts published in the *Catholic Bulletin*, *Insurrection* explicitly depicted O'Farrell's role in the Rising as it showed her both caring for an injured James Connolly, dodging bullets as she traversed the streets of Dublin, and negotiating at gunpoint with the British army. For more on the impact of *Insurrection*, see: Mark McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising: Explorations of History-Making, Commemoration and Heritage in Modern Times* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 225-6.

O'Farrell as 'if not for TV, she might have receded into the company of the ghosts of Easter Week'.<sup>561</sup> O'Farrell's inclusion in *Insurrection* was hailed as a moment of clear remembrance, of rediscovery and rescue from obscurity, yet the praise for the documentary team overlooked the continuous efforts and memory-keeping practices of nationalist women who had been recognising and memorialising O'Farrell since her death in 1957.

Following *Insurrection* and the 1966 commemoration of the Easter Rising, O'Farrell was mythologised in the state narrative of the revolution as the unthreatening symbol of 'Nurse O'Farrell'; a mode of remembrance that erased the complexity of her militancy and her continued republican activism in the post-war period.<sup>562</sup> Yet, as Guy Beiner has argued, official commemoration cannot totally erase deviant narratives of remembrance.<sup>563</sup> Outside of the state mythology of the revolution, republican women and other radical networks continued to highlight O'Farrell's political activism and militancy. For example, a 1981 booklet co-produced by the republican National Commemoration Committee and the Worker's Party of Ireland focused on O'Farrell's socialist and feminist activism, praising her for challenging the gendered regime of the Irish Free State and the Republic of Ireland.<sup>564</sup> Her importance as a nationalist militant was also recognised in the wave of feminist scholarship that emerged in the 1980s. In the 2000s, the Irish state began to publically recognise O'Farrell through physical memorials—a rarity in the Irish built landscape, where women have been represented as allegorical embodiments of the nation rather than historical figures.<sup>565</sup> In 2003, a commemorative plaque dedicated to O'Farrell was unveiled in Dublin, and in 2012, a park near O'Farrell's home was renamed after her. While physical monuments hold the power to rescript national memory, these examples continued to exclusively frame O'Farrell as the brave nurse of 1916, without recognising her complex engagement with nationalism during and after the revolution. It is inaccurate to say that O'Farrell's participation was erased entirely after the revolutionary period, but her place within the cultural memory of revolutionary Ireland was centred on a reductive narrative of women's engagement with war that framed her as a symbol rather than a complex historical actor. Furthermore, this remembrance did not acknowledge the role of militant women in maintaining her memory against attempts of erasure by the state.

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<sup>561</sup> News clipping of Dubliner's Diary, [date unknown] in UCD, MS P106/1557.

<sup>562</sup> McAuliffe, 'Remembered For Being Forgotten', pp. 32-4.

<sup>563</sup> Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p. 305.

<sup>564</sup> NLI, MS 246/17. Ireland was declared a republic in 1949.

<sup>565</sup> Casserly and O'Neil, pp. 23-4.

In the lead-up to the centenary of the Easter Rising, however, an alternative narrative would develop around O'Farrell as she became the embodiment of women's exclusion from the revolutionary mythology. The re-circulation of the surrender photograph in Figure 4.4 and the narrative of airbrushing surrounding it, which had been a peripheral aspect of O'Farrell's remembrance during the post-conflict period, now dominated discussion surrounding O'Farrell. In 2011, *Réabhlóid*, a RTÉ documentary series looking at the lesser-known stories of the Easter Rising, used the photograph as a framing device to explore the erasure of Elizabeth O'Farrell, proposing that the photograph was deliberately staged to remove O'Farrell, though it also acknowledged O'Farrell's 1957 interview where she asserted that she stepped out of frame.<sup>566</sup> Brian Merriman's 2014 play *Éirebrushed* revived debates around the erasure of O'Farrell, sparking a wave of newspaper articles and editorials questioning why this woman had been written out of Irish history.<sup>567</sup> Ironically, while Merriman's play was the lynchpin in publicising O'Farrell as the 'forgotten woman' of Irish history, his play focused on the erasure of queer histories in Ireland, an aspect of O'Farrell's identity that remains conspicuously absent from her public persona.<sup>568</sup>



This sequence shows the original photograph (left) of the moment Padraig Pearse surrendered to General Lowe. Beside Pearse (obscured) is Nurse O'Farrell. In the second photograph the expressions of the British soldiers' faces were changed — and by the third picture Nurse O'Farrell was eliminated from the scene.

Images Courtesy: National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts & History / Kilmainham Gaol

**Figure 4.10**, Brian Merriman, 'Éirebrushed', *The Journal*, 26 April 2014.

While Figure 4.4 was republished in these articles, an example of which can be seen above in Figure 4.10, the discussion of the airbrushing itself was vague, with little detail of

<sup>566</sup> 'Snapshot of Surrender', *Réabhlóid- Revolutionary Tales*, RTÉ, 2 October 2011, 7.30pm.

<sup>567</sup> This began with Aoife Barry's 2014 article 'Éirebrushed- in *The Journal*', which was then followed by articles in the *Irish Independent*, the *Irish Times* and the *New York Times*, amongst others. Aoife Barry, 'Éirebrushed: The Woman "Written Out" of Irish History', *The Journal*, 26 April 2014, <<https://www.thejournal.ie/eirebrushed-play-1428985-Apr2014>> (accessed 21 October 2021)

<sup>568</sup> *Éirebrushed* focused on four queer historical figures in the Irish nationalist movement—Elizabeth O'Farrell, Patrick Pearse, Roger Casement and Eva Gore Booth—awakening in 2014 Dublin and questioning the success of their revolution.

where the airbrushed photograph had circulated or who it had been edited by. Aoife Barry's 2014 article 'Éirebrushed' used a compilation of images to illustrate the supposed editing process, seen in Figure 4.10, but did not mention that these archival images were from different publications, nor that the image as a whole was edited rather than just the traces of O'Farrell. Within these articles, the complex history of the photograph was reduced to a simplistic narrative of erasure and contemporary rediscovery, which framed O'Farrell as the passive subject of erasure with no discussion on how she deliberately stepped out of shot or the ways in which she and other militant women memorialised her participation.

Outside of the press, centenary exhibitions and performances invoked O'Farrell's erasure as a means of commentary on contemporary erasure, cementing her new legacy as the embodiment of women's marginalisation in Ireland. *Walking Pale* (2016) by Jessica and Megan Kennedy used O'Farrell as a way of speaking out about Ireland's abortion policy and the stigma attached to it, while Jaki Irvine's *If The Ground Should Open* (2016) used her to attack the financial corruption of Irish government in the 2000s.<sup>569</sup> Within these works, only Emma O'Donoghue's monologue in *Signatories* (2016) embodied the contradictions of a woman remembered for being forgotten.<sup>570</sup> Performed in Kilmainham Gaol, O'Donoghue challenged glorified narratives of revolution by lingering on the question of what happens after. O'Donoghue reflected on the difficulties of remembering women in patriarchal narratives of war and locating the fragmented traces of their agency: whether that be speaking out about their experiences or stepping outside of a photograph, an argument that disrupts the axiomatic belief that visibility equates to empowerment.<sup>571</sup> Reflections such as O'Donoghue's, however, remained on the periphery of the official commemorative narrative which instead sought to celebrate the supposed rediscovery and reincorporation of O'Farrell into the narrative.

One example of this celebration of rediscovery was the representation of O'Farrell in the RTÉ *Centenary* pageant (2016), which melded together dance, music, and poetry to retell the history of Ireland. Throughout nineteenth and twentieth-century Ireland, historical pageantry constructed ideological narratives of the past. The Irish Free State, in particular, mobilised pageantry to build a unifying national identity and legitimise their power in the face of the divisive and fractious Irish Civil War.<sup>572</sup> Broadcast live from the Bord Gáis theatre in

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<sup>569</sup> Michael Seaver, 'Forgetting and Remembering: Finding the Past in the Future', *Dance Ireland*, (2016), p. 6; Durcan, p. 235.

<sup>570</sup> Anthony Roche, 'Thomas MacDonagh's 1916: Protagonist and Playwright', *New Hibernia Review*, 21.1 (2017), 18-40.

<sup>571</sup> Casserly, p. 240.

<sup>572</sup> Joan Fitzpatrick Dean, 'Rewriting the Past: Historical Pageantry in the Dublin Civic Weeks of 1927 and 1929', *New Hibernia Review*, 13.1 (2009), 20-41, pp. 22-3.

Dublin, *Centenary* aimed to subvert this tradition, as it specifically sought to reincorporate historical actors previously excluded from such celebrations, notably militant women. Its depiction of the early twentieth century highlighted women's involvement in political movements such as suffrage, socialism, and revolutionary nationalism, and during its interpretation of the Easter Rising, female actors were present throughout the Irish rebels. The focal point of the Rising section was Elizabeth O'Farrell, whose solo dance performance signified the surrender of the rebels.



**Figure 4.11**, RTÉ, Centenary, 28 March 2016, Bord Gáis Theatre, Dublin.

As seen in Figure 4.11, a projection of the surrender photograph, with O'Farrell obscured, was imposed onto the backdrop of a burning GPO, while an actress playing O'Farrell emerged from backstage carrying a white flag that signified her role in negotiating the surrender. Dancing across the stage in a mimic of how she travelled between different rebel garrisons, O'Farrell dismissed the Irish rebels and British army officers, before lying down on stage with her white flag wrapped around her like a shroud. Katherine Van Winkle identified this moment as a way in which 'the repertoire intervenes in the archive, editing and restoring the backstory of a photograph'.<sup>573</sup> Yet, this performance does not restore the history

<sup>573</sup> Katherine van Winkle, "'They Shall Be Speaking Forever': Performing Revolution, Riot and the Nation in the Centenary Commemorations of Ireland's 1916 Rising" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Texas, 2019), p. 186.

of the photograph; rather it authenticates the myth of O'Farrell as the forgotten woman of Irish history, reframes her as a nationalist symbol, and furthers the collective erasure of women's militancy throughout the remainder of the revolutionary period. Across Ireland and Spain, the visibility of women within narratives of war has hinged on their representation as allegorical symbols, and in this instance, O'Farrell's 'death' scene stands for the end of the Easter Rising. Yet, O'Farrell's militancy only intensified after the insurrection, thus using O'Farrell to represent the symbolic demise of the rebellion does her memory a disservice, as well as showcasing a reluctance to engage with the complexity of her post-conflict politics. Moreover, while *Centenary* primarily celebrated the Easter Rising, it also retold a mythologised version of the War of Independence and Civil War. Within this retelling, women were entirely absent from the stage. It would seem that the recovery of women's experiences was limited to only the Easter Rising; an example of the selective public remembrance that Laura McAttackney problematised in her analysis of gendered memory during the Decade of Centenaries.<sup>574</sup> The pageant celebrates women's participation in the Rising, and uses O'Farrell's performance to signify their recovery from the margins of history, however, women's own counter-narratives of the revolution and the role of the state in manufacturing women's erasure remains unacknowledged. Thus, while *Centenary* uses a moment of photographic erasure to adopt O'Farrell into the revolutionary narrative, it in fact further embeds her, and other militant women, into the process of erasure.

Within the 2016 centenary of the Easter Rising, the explicit recognition and rediscovery of Elizabeth O'Farrell symbolised the re-integration of women into the narrative of the Irish revolution from the margins of history. The iconic photograph thus served as a vehicle of remembrance, a means of making O'Farrell visible without reckoning with the complex dynamics of her erasure and the role of the state in perpetuating this. However, the visibility offered by this mode of remembrance is itself ephemeral. The RTÉ centennial project *Rebellion* (2016), a dramatised account of the Easter Rising explicitly focusing on women's perspectives of the event, actively erased O'Farrell and replaced her with an unnamed male character. Even when in the midst of a commemoration dedicating to recovering women, their participation and presence is still subject to erasure within a patriarchal narrative of war. Within contemporary commemorative narratives, O'Farrell has been mythologised as a forgotten woman airbrushed from Irish history. In this chapter, however, I have demonstrated the need to deconstruct this narrative by firstly historicising the photograph it is based on and secondly by considering how women's own practices of

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<sup>574</sup> McAttackney, '1916 and After', pp. 72-3.

remembrance fought against erasure. In doing so, I repositioned the photograph of O'Farrell, framing it not only as a metaphor for the erasure of women, but also a radical record of militant women's agency and resistance against erasure. Deconstructing iconic photographs in this way opens up new questions on the dynamics of cultural memory in contemporary Ireland and Spain, and the way commemorative demands for visibility are entangled with existing processes of erasure. In the next section, I continue this approach of deconstruction and disruption by analysing the myths surrounding the iconic photograph of the Spanish Communist Marina Ginestà.

#### 4.2 Counteracting Erasure: Photography and the Myth of Marina Ginestà in the Cultural Memory of the Spanish Civil War



Figure 4.12, L'Ajuntament de Barcelona, 'Jo Vull La Pau-- Pero No Vull L'Oblit', 2016, Barcelona

In 2016, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the Barcelona City Council, led by mayor Ada Colau, unveiled a series of commemorative events that aimed to create more inclusive narratives of the civil war. This project was first announced with a series of banners and posters, such as the example seen in Figure 4.12, which were put on display across the city. Like Sineád Guckian's painting of Elizabeth O'Farrell, these posters used an iconic photograph of a militant woman as a vehicle of memory to foster an alternative narrative of war. Alongside the text 'Barcelona *in memoriam* 19.7.1936-19.7.2016' and a quote from the Catalan poet Màrius Torres, 'Jo vull la pau, pero no vull l'oblit' (I long for peace, but not for oblivion), was a photograph of a young woman with a rifle strapped to her back

staring confidently at the viewer.<sup>575</sup> This woman, unnamed in the campaign, was Marina Ginestà, a Communist militant whose defiant gaze was first captured by the photographer Juan Guzmán in July 1936. The publication of Ginestà's image highlights the aim of this campaign, as the photograph challenges the erasure of the role of women in war. Yet, Ginestà herself was only mentioned cursorily during the campaign; neither her name nor the photographer's was present on the poster. In a commemorative moment dedicated to recovering women's histories, she was used a visual symbol of war and revolution and as a tool to authenticate women's newfound presence in public narratives of war, while neglecting her own complex experiences of war. Within this process of remembrance, Ginestà herself is overshadowed.

Recent commemorations of war in Spain have centred on the recovery of suppressed narratives of the civil war and the construction of new, challenging narratives, a process that has become intertwined with the contestation of patriarchal gender roles.<sup>576</sup> Historically, commemoration of the Spanish Civil War has been fraught, and in the years from the aftermath of the war, to the dictatorship, to the transition to democracy in the 1980s, to the present day, there have been substantial transformations in how militant women have been remembered.<sup>577</sup> During the Francoist dictatorship, women's experiences of war were forcibly silenced within a process of historical and social amnesia; a legacy of marginalisation that is only recently being reckoned with in public narratives of the past.<sup>578</sup> The death of Franco and subsequent transition to democracy enabled women to publicly seek recognition for their role in war, yet, as I discussed in the previous chapter, these practices of memory activism were unrecognised and unacknowledged in favour of reframing the civil war as an event unworthy of commemoration.<sup>579</sup> Since 2000, however, there has been a renewed drive to recover and commemorate excluded experiences of war within the public realm, driven by groups such as the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Association for the Recovery of

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<sup>575</sup> Max Ledo, 'Barcelona Marks the 80th Anniversary of the War and the Revolution', *Info Barcelona*, 18 July 2016, <[https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/barcelona-marks-the-80th-anniversary-of-the-war-and-the-revolution\\_384477.html](https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/barcelona-marks-the-80th-anniversary-of-the-war-and-the-revolution_384477.html)>, (accessed 7 September 2021). It is also important to note the importance of the term 'oblit/ olvido' within Spanish commemorative culture, as it references the period of enforced amnesia and silencing known as the 'Pacto del Olvido' that accompanied the Spanish transition to democracy after the death of Franco.

<sup>576</sup> Olga Bezhanova, 'Masculinity and Historical Memory: Benjamín Prado and Andrés Trapiello', in *The Dynamics of Masculinity in Contemporary Spanish Culture*, ed. by Lorraine Ryan and Ana Corbalan (New York: Routledge, 2017) pp. 49-63, (p. 49).

<sup>577</sup> Helen Graham, 'The Spanish Civil War, 1936-2003: The Return of Republican Memory', *Science and Society*, 68.3 (2004), 313-28, p. 314.

<sup>578</sup> Graham, *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 30

<sup>579</sup> Lorraine Ryan, 'For Whom the Dominant Memory Tolls', p. 121.

Historical Memory).<sup>580</sup> Arising from this has been a recognition of the deliberate erasure of women's experiences, and organisations such as the Fundación Trece Rosas, named after thirteen Communist women executed by the Francoist regime in 1939, have sought to explicitly recover women's experiences of the war and dictatorship. However, like the recovery of women's experiences of the Irish revolutionary period during the Decade of Centenaries, the re-inscription of women into the public narrative of the Spanish Civil War has often relied on the recovery of a minority of iconic women, while neglecting the complex experiences of the majority of female participants.

Building on this drive to challenge the silencing of women's experiences of war, a wealth of public expositions, museum exhibitions and memorials have been dedicated to recovering women's memories and experiences of war.<sup>581</sup> Photographs have been critical within this effort to re-situate women within the mainstream narratives of the Spanish Civil War. As part of this resurgence of historical memory, archival photographs of militant women have been placed on display in exhibits, such as in the Córdoba Forum for Memory's 'Presas de Franco' (2009) and Ana Teresa Ortega's 'Cartografías Silenciadas' (2010), and remobilised in documentary and fictional films, such as Susana Kosta's *Mujeres En Pie de la Guerra* (2004).<sup>582</sup> This usage is predicated on the idea of the photograph as a supposedly objective trace of the past that opens a space for projection and imagination.<sup>583</sup> Juan Guzmán's 1936 photograph of Marina Ginestà has been the most prominent example of this renewed circulation of historical photographs of militant women. While in Ireland, historical photographs of militant women such as Elizabeth O'Farrell have been used within commemorative narratives to signify women's erasure, in Spain, the photograph of Marina Ginestà is used to celebrate women's rediscovery; another facet of the entanglement of erasure and visibility within photographs. Like the photograph of O'Farrell, a rich mythology of erasure and rediscovery has developed

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<sup>580</sup> The work of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH), founded by Emilio Silva in 2000, is one of the most prominent acts of recovery and commemoration in contemporary Spain, as they pioneered a nationwide campaign to exhume and recover the bodies of those killed during the war and the Francoist regime. Layla Renshaw, 'Unrecovered Objects: Narratives of Dispossession, Slow Violence and Survival in the Investigation of Mass Graves from the Spanish Civil War', *Journal of Material Culture*, 25.4 (2020), 428-46.

<sup>581</sup> Laia Quílez Esteve, 'Feminine Resistances: The Figure of the Republican Woman in Carolina Astudillo's Documentary Cinema', *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies*, 8.1 (2016), 79-93, p. 90.

<sup>582</sup> For discussion of the role of photography in these artistic commemorations see: M. Cinta Ramblado-Minero, 'Sites of Memory/Sites of Oblivion in Contemporary Spain', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 36.1 (2011), 29-42; Ofelia Ferrán, 'Grievability and the Politics of Visibility: The Photography of Francesc Torres and the Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War', in *Memory and Postwar Memorials: Confronting the Violence of the Past*, ed. by Marc Silberman and Florence Vatan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 117-36; Quílez Esteve, 'Feminine Resistances', p. 81.

<sup>583</sup> Hirsch, p. 117. Katherine Stafford's examination of Agustí Centelles photographs within modern exhibitions on the Spanish Civil War demonstrates more generally how photographs have been used in commemorations of the civil war. Stafford, 'Photojournalism and Memory', pp. 1219-26.

around this image as it is recirculated in the twenty-first century, and its protagonist, the young militant Marina Ginestà has been canonised as an icon of war and revolution. Yet, the prominence of this photograph within contemporary Spanish commemorative culture prompts several questions. What is the history of this photograph, and why was it only rediscovered in the 2000s? Who is Ginestà and why was this photograph taken of her? Finally, how does this photograph shape our understanding of women's militancy during the Spanish Civil War? By historicising this photograph and deconstructing the mythologisation surrounding it, I aim to answer these questions and address how this photograph in fact obscures the reality of Ginestà's role in war, and furthermore how it maintains a patriarchal narrative of women's militancy.



**Figure 4.13**, Juan Guzmán, 'Marina Ginestà posa en la terraza del hotel Colón', Barcelona, July 1936. Agencia EFE, Madrid.

Originally shot in 1936, Guzmán's photograph of Ginestà, seen in Figure 4.13, only reached the public gaze when it was published in Agencia EFE's 2002 book *Imágenes Inéditas de la Guerra Civil, 1936-1939* (Unpublished Images of the Civil War, 1936-1939), a photobook illustrating the development of photojournalism during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>584</sup> While unpublished during the war, this photograph nevertheless seemed primed to become an icon of war: taken on a Leica camera with 35mm film, it was of a higher and more cinematic quality

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<sup>584</sup> Elsa Fernández Santos, 'La Agencia Efe Recupera de sus Archivos Imágenes Inéditas de la Guerra Civil', *El País*, 1 May 2002 <[https://elpais.com/diario/2002/05/02/cultura/1020290407\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2002/05/02/cultura/1020290407_850215.html)> (accessed 21 September 2021).

than other press reportage shot at the same time. Guzmán's subject, an attractive young woman wearing worker's overalls, with a rifle slung across her back and a serene, confident look on her face, exemplified the revolutionary ideal of the militiawomen who were visualised across propaganda, photography, and art during the heady, early days of war. Like the press photographs of militiawomen explored in Chapter 2, the aesthetic appeal of this image lay in the clash between the masculine militarism of Ginesta's clothing and rifle, and her visual femininity, conveyed through her youthful beauty and the wind whipping through her short hair.<sup>585</sup> Standing on the edge of the Hotel Colón, with the city of Barcelona behind her, she represented a sense of futurity and hope that echoed throughout Barcelona in the summer of 1936. Since its emergence in 2002, it has become an iconic photograph within Spanish visual culture, and as I will explore later in this chapter, it has been continually circulated across both official and community commemorations of war. Beyond Spain, this image has been adopted into different political contexts, becoming a symbol of anti-fascism, political militancy, and women's revolutionary empowerment through the recreation of this photograph within political poster art, souvenirs, and street art.

The circulation and reproduction of this photograph has transformed Ginestà into a symbol of revolutionary womanhood, and she has become a critical part of the cultural memory of the Spanish Civil War. However, the photograph of Ginestà is not only a symbol of the Spanish militiawomen; it is also a record of how the complex militancy and engagement of these women is condensed into reductive, symbolic iconography. Yet, like the mythologisation of Elizabeth O'Farrell, the induction of Ginestà as a photographic symbol into the cultural memory of the war does not substantively disturb the patriarchal foundations of the public narratives of war. Like many women before her, Ginestà has been adopted into the cultural narrative of war as a symbol of the romanticised female combatant, while her own complex history and experiences of war is deliberately omitted. Historicising this photograph reveals the multi-layered narratives contained beneath the surface of Guzmán's photograph that hold the potential to disrupt these reductive narratives of war.

The communist militant Marina Ginestà and the German photographer Juan Guzmán, also known as Hans Gutman, met on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1936, in the revolutionary days after the attempted Nationalist military revolt had been overthrown in Barcelona. Marina Ginestà was born in 1919 in Toulouse to a Catalan family who returned to Barcelona during her childhood. Her family was politically active and she too was a dedicated activist from a young age,

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<sup>585</sup> Xulio García Bilbao, 'Marina Ginesta, Icono Femenino de la Guerra Civil', *Frente de Madrid: Boletín Trimestral de GEFREMA*, 13 (2008), 26-9, p. 27.

affiliated first to the Catalan Communist Party before joining the Catalan Unified Socialist Youth (PSUC) in April 1936. After the outbreak of war, Ginestà worked as a typist for the PSUC military committee in the Hotel Colón, which they had taken over and used as a recruitment centre.<sup>586</sup> It was here that she first met Juan Guzmán, a German Communist photographer who had travelled to Barcelona to photograph the People's Olympics, which were suspended after the Nationalist coup.<sup>587</sup> After photographing the popular celebrations in the streets of Barcelona in the aftermath of the failed coup, Guzmán entered the Hotel Colón in order to enrol in the Communist Trueba-Del Barrio militia.<sup>588</sup> While there, he took several series of photographs, including the most well-known shot from his body of work: the iconic photograph of the seventeen-year-old Marina Ginestà standing on the rooftop of the Hotel Colón. While the contemporary resonance of this image within Spanish commemorative culture lies in its apparent authentic portrayal of a militiawoman, it was in fact a staged shot. Having previously analysed the photograph as a single image, I will now examine it as one frame within the original sequence of shots, a framework that reveals the deliberate nature of constructing and staging revolutionary photography.<sup>589</sup>

In the days prior to photographing Ginestà, Guzmán took a series of photographs of revolutionary Barcelona during the immediate aftermath of the Nationalist revolt. He captured the barricades and militias that dominated the streets, and in particular, he shot photographs of militant women that seemed to inspire his later images of Ginestà. His unpublished photographs taken on the 20<sup>th</sup> July, for example, featured women in positions of strength and authority. One image depicting a parade of young militiamen and women marching down a tree-lined street in uniform with rifles on their shoulders, while another featured a group of men and women from the UGT militia celebrating their victory behind a barricade, fists held high in a statement of solidarity and power.

The photograph that most evokes the revolutionary aesthetic seen in the Ginestà photograph is an action shot that Guzmán took of a young militiawoman on a truck in the streets of Barcelona on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1936. Guzmán's caption of the image provided little detail on who this woman was, only describing her as 'a militiawoman on top of a truck on the

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<sup>586</sup> Danny Evans, *Revolution and the State: Anarchism in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>587</sup> Incidentally, Marina had been due to compete at the People's Olympics as well as working as a translator for the organising committee. Ray Physick, 'The *Olimpiada Popular*. Barcelona, 1936, Sport and Politics in an Age of War, Dicatorship and Revolution', *Sport in History*, 37.1 (2017), 51-75, p. 67.

<sup>588</sup> Alfonso Morales, *Juan Guzmán* (Mexico City: Editorial RM, 2014).

<sup>589</sup> In her analysis of Spanish Civil War photography, Alison Young describes this as a similar process as seeing the sketches for a painting. Alison Young quoted in Faber, p. 35.

streets of Barcelona, during the first days of civil war'.<sup>590</sup> While less visually clear than the Ginestà photograph, it is nevertheless striking. The position of the camera forced an upwards



**Figure 4.15**, Juan Guzmán, 'Miliciana sobre un camión en las calles de Barcelona', 20 July 1936, Barcelona. Agencia EFE, Madrid.

perspective, giving the woman a more powerful and authoritative aura underlined by her active handling of the weapon—a position that was, as Lisa Lines has highlighted in her semiotic analysis of civil war photography, a rarity in photographs of militiawomen.<sup>591</sup>

In placing the single image in dialogue with Guzmán's photographs of Ginestà taken the next day, it is clear that these images provide a critical context for understanding the iconic photograph of Ginestà. Figure 4.13 was an attempt to crystallise the revolutionary aura of Barcelona, and the accompanying fluidity of gendered participation in war, into a single image. While Guzmán's documentary images of revolutionary Barcelona were filled with representations of militant women, it is within his photographs of Marina Ginestà that he attempts to construct her as a revolutionary icon and symbol, reflecting a longer tradition of allegorical representations of women in revolutionary iconography.<sup>592</sup> In twenty frames on the

<sup>590</sup> Madrid, Agencia EFE, Juan Guzmán Collection 8085526.

<sup>591</sup> Lines, *Milicianas*, p. 152.

<sup>592</sup> Gordon, p. 67.

21<sup>st</sup> July 1936, Guzmán redefined Ginestà as the idealised fantasy of the Spanish revolutionary woman: a beautiful, young woman holding the symbols of battle while remaining detached from the violent realities of frontline combat.



**Figure 4.16** Juan Guzmán, 'Marina Ginestà posa en la terraza del hotel Colón', Barcelona, July 1936. Agencia EFE, Madrid.

This process of visually redefining Ginestà as an archetypical symbol of revolutionary femininity is underscored when examining the photograph within the broader production of the image. The twenty-shot series reflects the deliberate and staged nature of Figure 4.13, as it highlights the multitude of ways in which Guzmán asked Ginestà to pose in order to most effectively capture the revolutionary atmosphere and spirit of Barcelona within the figure of a single woman. In these different poses and compositions, we can see the process of constructing an iconic image, a process that is hidden when the image is circulated within the public domain. All of the images show Ginestà with Guzmán's borrowed gun, and in the earliest images, she seems uncomfortable handling it, reflecting both her own inexperience with the weapon and her objection to including it in the image. In an interview taken by Xulio García Bilbao, she asserted that she disliked the aggressive tone of the images and that she had

believed it did not represent her own duties as a typist and journalist.<sup>593</sup> Figure 4.13 is famed for Ginestà's striking gaze and confident stance, however, other photographs in the series show different poses and compositions: in some, Ginestà is photographed in a passive stance with the rifle mostly hidden by her body as she smiles nervously at the camera. In others, such as Figure 4.16, she was shot from a distance, her face mostly in shadow as she stands on the edge of the rooftop with her body fully in shot. Standing to attention in a way that evoked a martial masculinity, this composition invested her with a defiant power and authority as she towered over the landmarks of Barcelona and looked down at the camera. Throughout these frames, the deliberate nature of Guzmán's photography is revealed, and it challenges the contemporary mythologies surrounding the photograph of Marina Ginestà.

Guzmán's photograph has shaped how women's militancy is defined in contemporary Spain, but re-locating this image as a staged photograph allows us to deconstruct and problematise the narrative it depicts. Just as the photographic mythologisation of Elizabeth O'Farrell constructed a linear, simplistic narrative of erasure and rediscovery that obscured the complexity of her own visual agency, Guzmán's photograph undercuts the diversity and complexity of Spanish women's militancy during the civil war by conflating active participation with combat. In insisting on including the rifle in the photograph, Guzmán implicitly undermined the validity of Ginestà's own participation in war as a typist, political activist, and interpreter. These roles are essential to the infrastructure of conflict, yet within the visual narrative of war they are frequently rendered invisible. This deconstruction of Figure 4.13 reflects the need to continually interrogate how and why women are made visible, and question what remains un-photographed and unseen within these representations of idealised militant women. While this photograph reflects an idealised fantasy of Spanish women's militancy, other photographs in Guzmán's collection reveal an alternative gaze at women's militancy that provides a more complex understanding of how women participated in conflict.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> August at the Bujalaroz front in Zaragoza, Guzmán shot another series of photographs of Ginestà in her role as an interpreter for the Soviet journalist Mikael Koltsov and the anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti. Taken on Perutz film, which was of poorer quality than 35mm film used in his July photographs, this shot is more in line with the candid style of photography that characterised the majority of his war photographs. Guzmán took six photographs of this meeting and Ginestà was present in all of them, though as Figure 4.17

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<sup>593</sup> Garcia Bilbao, p. 26.

shows, she was not the focus of these images. Indeed, she was often obscured or partially cut out of the shots in order to focus on Koltsov and Durruti.



**Figure 4.17**, Juan Guzmán, 'Mijail Koltsov se entrevista con el dirigente anarquista Buenaventura Durruti', 14 August 1936, Zaragoza. Agencia EFE, Madrid.

While Figure 4.13 reinforces a singular ideal of Spanish women's militancy, this series of images challenges this by visualising the diverse scope of women's participation. While the caption of the image still misreported her name and referred to her as the 'miliciana Marina Jinesta', Guzmán actively acknowledged and placed value on Ginestà's own participation, rather than attempting to remake her into an idealised archetype of the militiawoman. In comparison to Figure 4.13, it approaches women's place in war with more nuance, moving away from the forced inclusion of rifles and dramatic compositions to instead reflect women as part of the reality of life at the front. Yet, while these images demonstrated the diversity of women's militancy and participation in conflict, they have not been widely published in the public realm, and they remain in the archive of Agencia EFE, alongside thousands of other photographs from Guzmán's collection that hold the potential to disrupt and challenge the cultural narratives of war established in state commemorations.

After the victory of the Nationalist army in April 1939, both Ginestà and Guzmán fled Spain, taking their photographs with them. Ginestà was first interred in a concentration camp run by the Italian army in Alicante before she escaped to France in May 1939.<sup>594</sup> Crossing the border, she pretended to be French and she reunited with her mother in Paris before the occupation of Paris by the Nazis forced them to flee again to the Dominican Republic. Marina

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<sup>594</sup> Garcia Bilbao, p. 28.

married her first husband there before the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo forced her and her family into exile again. After marrying her second husband, a diplomat, Marina settled again in Paris, where she would remain until her death. Juan Guzmán left Spain for Mexico, where he continued to work as a photographer and he immersed himself in Mexico City's artistic circles, notably photographing the work of his friends Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. While his later work was exhibited at local and international museums, his photography from the Spanish Civil War remained in his personal collections until his wife, Teresita Miranda Guzmán, sold it to the Agencia EFE in 1987. From then on, his photograph of Marina Ginestà would remain in the EFE archive until it was published in 2002.

The re-emergence of Guzmán's photograph of Ginestà in 2002 redefined her from a metaphor for revolutionary Barcelona to a symbol of the mythic Spanish militiawoman. Guzmán's photograph of Ginestà was first published in *Imágenes Inéditas*, a photobook written and published by the Agencia EFE using images from their archival collection of photojournalism from the Spanish Civil War. In the years since its publication, it has been converted into a travelling exhibition that has been installed across Europe. Bringing together unpublished photographs from both well-known and anonymous photographers with fragments of poetry and literature, this book provided an alternative view on the Civil War by highlighting images of refugees, civilians, protestors, and both male and female participants. Guzmán's image of Ginestà initially garnered public attention as it was used to publicise *Imágenes Inéditas* in the press. However, it was its reproduction in 2003 as the cover of Carlos Fonseca's popular biography *Trece Rosas Rojas* (Thirteen Red Roses), an exploration of the infamous execution of thirteen young women for Communist activism at the end of the war, which transformed it into an icon.<sup>595</sup> Fonseca used the archival photograph of Ginestà standing on the edge of the Hotel Colón with her rifle to illustrate the story of the thirteen militant women executed by the Francoist state, reflecting how women's militancy is visually conflated with active combat. The use of the photograph of Ginestà on the cover of this unrelated biography reflects how the circulation and appropriation of the photograph into the commemorative visual culture of the Spanish Civil War collapsed the historic and social dimensions of the image.<sup>596</sup> Like the mythologisation of Elizabeth O'Farrell in the Irish commemorative context, the photograph of Ginestà was used to represent ideologies and archetypes of women's militancy, rather than a militant woman with her own complex, interior life.

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<sup>595</sup> Fonseca, *Trece Rosas Rojas*. For a thorough examination of the narratives surrounding the Trece Rosas, see Linhard, *Fearless Women*, pp. 117-60.

<sup>596</sup> Merrill, p. 114.

The transformation of Ginestà into a revolutionary symbol was intensified by her apparent anonymity in the photograph. At the time it was taken in 1936, Guzmán incorrectly identified Ginestà as ‘the militiawoman Marina Jinesta’, a misspelling of her Catalan surname. Subsequent publications of the photograph after 2002 either kept this misnomer or, as in the case of Fonseca’s novel, omitted her name entirely. This allowed the viewer to project their own cultural memories, mythologies and beliefs onto the image, thereby obscuring the woman in the photograph in favour of an idealised symbol.<sup>597</sup> As this photograph became more prominent with the commemorative landscape of twenty-first century Spain, Ginestà was further redefined as an empowering symbol of women’s active presence in war, a cornerstone in the celebratory mythologisation of Spanish militiawomen. Yet, while this photograph was seen as a way to reinstitute women into public narratives of war, like the redefinition and recovery of Elizabeth O’Farrell as a ‘forgotten woman’, it reintegrated them through a reductive gaze that undermined the complexity and diversity of women’s experiences of war.<sup>598</sup> As Andrea Noble has argued in her analysis of photography of women in revolutionary Mexico, the impulse to use photographs to insert women back into history may provide evidence of women’s presence in war, but it does not disturb the patriarchal frameworks interwoven into the production and circulation of the image or the historical and cultural narratives of war.<sup>599</sup> In the case of Guzmán’s photograph of Ginestà, the afterlife of this photograph as an authentication of women’s active presence in war does not address either the complex, gendered dynamics of the Spanish warfront or the history of this photograph as a staged image.

However, in 2008 the narrative surrounding the photograph was interrupted when the documentary-maker and Agencia EFE archivist Xulio Garcia Bilbao re-identified ‘Marina Jinesta’ as the Communist activist, journalist and translator Marina Ginestà, who was alive and living in Paris, unaware of her newfound fame. Garcia Bilbao traced the name of the woman in the caption ‘Marina Jinesta’ through archival letters, memoirs and documents until he discovered that the name had been transcribed incorrectly, leading him to Paris where he reconnected Ginestà with her photograph. For Ginestà, who had not known about the image’s newfound fame, the photograph provoked a melancholic nostalgia for an unfulfilled future, reminding her of both the traumatic memories of war and exile, but also the

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<sup>597</sup> The affiliative look has been defined as the way in which the subjects of a photograph summon us to return their gaze in an act of mutual recognition. Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 9. Photographic theorists such as Marianne Hirsch, Shawn Michelle Smith, and Laura Wexler, however, have problematised this question of emotional projection and recognition, arguing that the affiliative gaze can obscure as much as it illuminates—particularly when we consider the racial and gendered implications of these visual practices.

<sup>598</sup> Linhard, *Fearless Women*, p. 43.

<sup>599</sup> Noble, ‘Gender in the Archive’, pp. 140-1.

revolutionary euphoria of the early days of the civil war. As part of an interview with García Bilbao, Ginestà recreated the rooftop photograph on her own balcony in Paris, holding in her hands not a rifle but a framed copy of the Guzmán photograph, as seen in Figure 4.18.

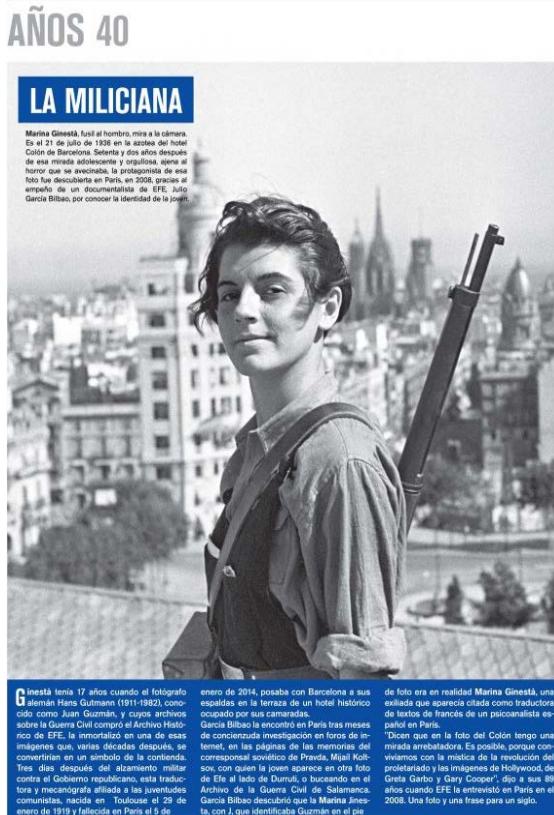


**Figure 4.18**, Boris Zabiensky, 'Marina Ginestà posa con unas de las fotos que el fotógrafo Juan Guzmán tomó cuando Ginestà tenía 17 años', Paris, 2008. Agencia EFE, Madrid.

This moment of rediscovery was adopted into the photographic narrative of Marina Ginestà, as Figure 4.18 has been exhibited alongside the 1936 shot of Ginestà in exhibits such as the 2009 Willy Brandt Haus exhibit 'From the Spanish Civil War to the Second World War' in Berlin. It was also widely circulated in the Spanish press, furthering Ginestà's fame and prominence within the commemorative landscape of contemporary Spain. However, just as O'Farrell's reflections in *An Fíolar* challenged the narrative of photographic airbrushing, Ginestà's memories of the production of the photograph complicated the narrative of empowerment and revolutionary femininity that had been imposed on it, as she revealed that it was not an authentic shot of a militiawoman, but rather a staged photograph. Yet, like O'Farrell's revelations about deliberately stepping outside of the shot of the surrender, Ginestà's insights into the photograph have been quietly omitted from the mythology surrounding the image within the cultural memory of war.

Since the rediscovery of Ginestà's identity, her name has been attached to the reproductions of this image across academic texts, government materials, and public exhibitions. However, while the rediscovery of Ginestà's identity was celebrated in the Spanish press, it did not significantly alter the mythology surrounding this photograph or its continued role as a visual signifier of Republican militant womanhood. Just as historicising O'Farrell's

photograph revealed the limits of recovery within Irish cultural narratives of war, deconstructing the photograph of Ginestà in the Spanish commemorative landscape reflects how the complex engagement of women during war is reduced to spectacular images of aestheticized ‘women warriors’, as evidenced by Figure 4.19.<sup>600</sup>



**Figure 4.19**, Museo EFE, ‘The Militiawoman’, Madrid, 2020. Courtesy of Museo EFE.

For International Women’s Day 2020, the Agencia EFE Museum installed a panel dedicated to Ginestà that identified her as ‘The Militiawoman’, maintaining the mythology of the photograph at the expense of reducing the complexity and richness of Ginestà’s militant participation as a journalist, activist and interpreter. While Ginestà’s own testimony, collected by a member of the Agencia EFE archive, revealed her ambivalence towards her status as a symbol of Republican militiawomen, the framing of this photograph in Figure 4.18 maintains the mythology of Ginestà as the icon of the Spanish militiawoman. In doing so, her own participation in war is obscured and undermined. This overwhelming focus on the appearance of militaristic femininity reinforces patriarchal boundaries of war and reproduces reductive

<sup>600</sup> Rodríguez López and Cazorla Sánchez, pp. 693-4. This parallels both historical and contemporary portrayals of women’s militancy within Irish commemorative culture. Mary Condren has analysed how a rhetoric of sacrifice and death denied women a space within the revolutionary narrative, and the contemporary repetition of this rhetoric denied recognition to the diverse activism of militant women in revolutionary Ireland. Mary Condren, ‘Sacrifice and Political Legitimation: The Production of a Gendered Social Order’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 6.4 (1995), 160-89.

narratives of women's militancy where it is only active combat that allows women to be recognised for their participation in war.

Ginestà's death in 2014 sparked national and international obituaries that once more circulated the iconic photograph of her as a 17-year-old militant, and the photograph achieved a new level of renown because of the element of rediscovery and mystery that Garcia Bilbao's search had added to the narrative. Despite Ginestà's re-identification and the wealth of feminist research on women in the civil war that had emerged since 2002, the commemorative narrative surrounding the photograph continued to position Ginestà as a symbol of the revolutionary militiawoman, though now with the correct name. After her death, she donated her own photographic collection to the Agencia EFE archive, allowing her to provide her own perspective on the war and add nuance to her portrayal in Guzmán's photography. It has been evidenced throughout this thesis that women's photographic engagement with war disturbs conventional cultural narratives of war, thus allowing militant women to challenge a gaze that seeks to both redefine and erase them. While the photographic culture of the Spanish front allowed for the transgressive presence of women on the frontlines to be seen, they were visualised and continually redefined within certain parameters of wartime femininity, as discussed in Chapter 2. Further to this, their presence on the front was captured, published and edited by a predominantly male cohort of photographers, editors and journalists, who framed them within ideological narratives that reinforced the gendered order either through framing women as revolutionary symbols or within domestic narratives. However, continuing the discussion from the previous chapter, women's vernacular photographic practices hold the potential to provide an alternative perspective to war.

Within Ginestà's photographic collection, the most striking image is a photograph taken in the Tardienta frontlines in Aragón in August 1936. Figure 4.19, a photograph of Ginestà and her brother Alberto reunited at the Tardienta front, reinstates Ginestà as an agent of her own visibility, both in her active presence in the photograph and by how she preserved it. Like the revolutionary portraiture commissioned by Cumann na mBan women, discussed in Chapter 2, this photograph provided an alternative gaze on the war front, defying the genre expectations of war photography to instead highlight a joyous moment of a familial encounter. Within Spain, women's vernacular photographs of the front are difficult to find in the archive, due to the curatorial preconceptions of these images as low status and the role of photographic archives as a tool of persecution during the Francoist regime. However, these photographs hold the potential to challenge reductive narratives of women and war, as they

highlight women's desire to record their participation and how they visualised themselves outside of the symbolic frameworks of revolutionary femininity.



**Figure 4.19**, Unknown, 'Tardienta (Huesca), Agosto de 1936', August 1936, Tardienta, Archivo Perianez Ginestà, Agencia EFE, Madrid.

Unlike Guzmán's iconic photograph, where he had editorial control, Ginestà and her brother dictated how they would be seen and preserved it throughout years of war, exile, and political turmoil. This photograph, and the emotional practices surrounding it, offers an important counter-narrative to Guzmán's photograph, as it adds nuance to our understanding of women's multifaceted roles at the front. However, as it is contained solely in the archive, unseen by the wider public, its potential to disrupt patriarchal narratives of war remains inert.<sup>601</sup> While the recovery of militant women into mainstream narratives of the Spanish Civil War has relied on the illustrative power of photographs, Figure 4.19 is just one example of how going beyond the allure of iconic photographs and examining women's practices and engagement with vernacular images of war allows us to enrich our understanding of women's militancy. Placing women's historical photographic practices in dialogue with their engagement with these images after conflict, as I have done in the previous case study and in Chapter 3, enables us to both use these photographs to substantiate women's participation in war and subvert the patriarchal frameworks that still control how militant women are represented in the public sphere.

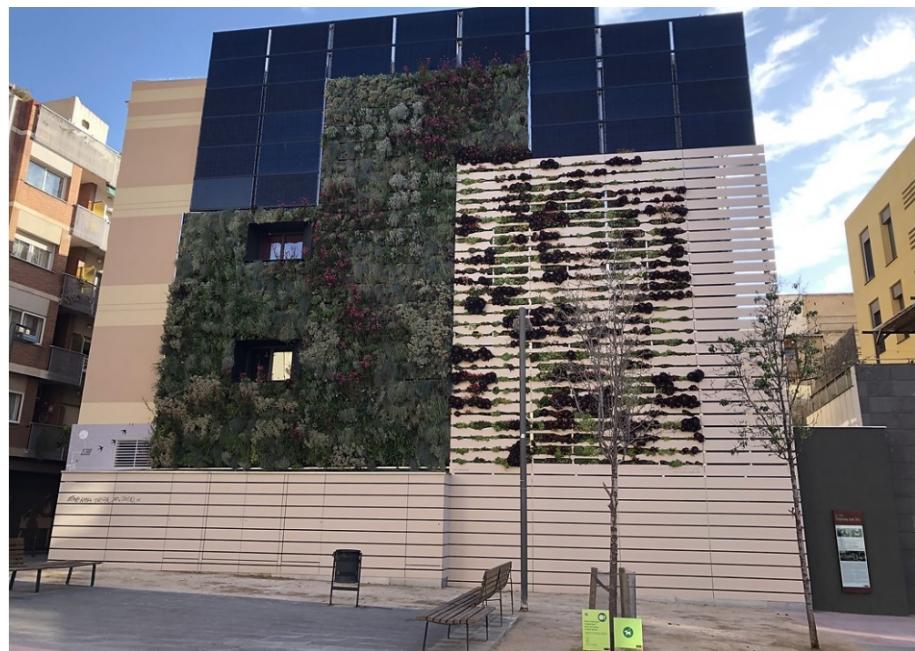
Without this nuance, the photograph of Marina Ginestà remains a fragmentary representation that mythologises Ginestà as an iconic image, while simultaneously obscuring her lived experience of war. The living mural of Ginestà in the Plaça de les Dones de 36

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<sup>601</sup> Aleida Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nunning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 97-108, (p. 103).

(Women of 1936 Square) underscores the limitations of this mode of commemoration.

In 2020, an abstracted mural of Ginestà was constructed in Barcelona by the landscaping firm Arquivistes, with the intention of memorialising the participation of militiawomen in the defence of the Second Republic.<sup>602</sup> The city councillor Eloi Badia Casas described this mural as a way to challenge the erasure of these women and capture the ‘courage, enthusiasm, determination and strength of the women of 1936’.<sup>603</sup>



**Figure 4.20** Arquivistes, ‘Pl. de les Dones del 36’, Barcelona, 2020.

Yet, while the plaque next to the mural describes the women of 1936 as a collective of women working across the rearguard and the front, the use of Guzmán’s photograph of Ginestà reinforces a dominant and totalising narrative of combat as the most valued and recognised form of women’s militancy. Furthermore, the translation of the photograph to the mural abstracts Ginestà, turning her into a silhouette that stands in for the mythic *miliciana*. Like the representations of Elizabeth O’Farrell in Irish commemorative culture discussed earlier in this chapter, this form of representation reframes Ginestà as a symbol of war that ultimately maintains a patriarchal narrative of conflict.

<sup>602</sup> Arquivistes, ‘Landscape Intervention’, <<https://en.arquivistes.com/plaza-dones36>> (accessed 21 December 2021).

<sup>603</sup> Eloi Badia Casas, ‘La Placa Dones del 36 Tindra Una Mitgera amb la Imatge de la Miliciana Marina Ginestà’, 20 August 2018, <[https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/gracia/ca/noticia/la-placa-dones-del-36-tindra-una-mitgera-amb-la-imatge-de-la-miliciana-marina-Ginestà\\_698323](https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/gracia/ca/noticia/la-placa-dones-del-36-tindra-una-mitgera-amb-la-imatge-de-la-miliciana-marina-Ginestà_698323)> (accessed 21 December 2021).

### 4.3 Conclusion

Commemoration is a double act of both remembrance and erasure.<sup>604</sup> The role of the iconic photographs of Elizabeth O'Farrell and Marina Ginestà in contemporary Irish and Spanish commemorative practices highlight this intersecting tension between the remembrance of some militant women and the wider erasure of their peers. As Roisín Higgins has discussed, the state uses public commemorations to define contemporary identities, both building on and rejecting certain aspects of the past in order to recover marginalised experiences into the mainstream cultural narratives of war.<sup>605</sup> The interplay of the past and present within iconic images transmit new narratives that enable the aesthetic and emotional resonances of the past to enter the contemporary moment, without disturbing the exclusionary, patriarchal framework of the mainstream war narrative.<sup>606</sup> Framing O'Farrell and Ginestà as singular icons of war allows the modern Irish and Spanish states to recover these women into the cultural memory of war, while disremembering the role of the state in erasing these women.

When inducted into narratives of war, photographs as images can sustain and reinforce patriarchal ideals of combat and engagement with war. Approaching these photographs as historical objects with their own embodied social biography, however, allows us to move beyond celebrating the photographic traces of women and instead interrogate the dynamics of how these women were photographed and made visible. Throughout this chapter, I have traced these iconic photographs from the moment of their creation through to their contemporary re-emergence, mapping the narratives imposed upon these photographs and bringing the interiority and agency of O'Farrell and Ginestà back into focus. In doing so, I demonstrated how the narratives of rediscovery surrounding these images hid their complex histories, and the ways in which they have continually been used to redefine the position of militant women within the cultural narratives of war. Through placing these case studies into dialogue, I established that this newfound recognition and visibility of women's militancy is not a break with tradition, but rather a continuation of the interplay between hypervisibility and erasure that has characterised how Irish and Spanish militant women have been seen throughout the entirety of the conflict and post-conflict periods.

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<sup>604</sup> Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, 'Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28.1 (2002), 1-19, p. 6.

<sup>605</sup> Higgins, 'Curators of Memory', p. 206.

<sup>606</sup> Stefka Hristova, 'Occupy Wall Street Meets Occupy Iraq: On Remembering and Forgetting in a Digital Age', *Radical History Review*, 117 (2013), 83-97, p. 89.

My analysis of the case studies of O'Farrell and Ginesta demonstrates that even within narratives of celebratory rediscovery, militant women continue to be subjected to erasure. Most prominently, as I have discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis, the focus on singular, exceptional women as representatives of women's participation in war enables the marginalisation of the wider movement of militant women in Ireland and Spain, particularly when their participation does not conform to the combative mythology of the militant woman in popular culture.<sup>607</sup> However, a deeper examination of these photographs reveals the presence of more insidious processes of erasure. Firstly, the elevation of these photographs into icons reframed O'Farrell and Ginestà as symbols of 'anonymous woman embodying eternal values'.<sup>608</sup> This then overshadowed their own agency as historical actors and their own personal histories of war. The redefinition of O'Farrell as a literal metaphor of photographic and historical erasure diminished her own decision to step outside of the British soldier's photograph of the surrender. In not acknowledging her own role in her erasure, she is positioned as a passive figure, whose presence in the historical narrative of the Irish revolution is reliant on the intervention of others. Similarly, Ginestà's redefinition as a symbol of revolutionary, Spanish womanhood eclipsed her own role in the war effort. In itself, Guzmán's photograph implicitly devalued her militant participation, as Guzmán demanded that she only be photographed with a rifle, despite her own ambivalence to this. Within contemporary uses of this photograph, she is continually invoked as a representation of the mythic *milicianas*, while the realities of her involvement as an activist, journalist, and interpreter are ignored. While O'Farrell and Ginestà are visually present in the modern cultural narratives of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War, they are seen as metaphors rather than historical actors with their own complex relations to war.

Further to this, detaching these images from their historical contexts and the photographic practices surrounding them also erases the role of women in using these photographs to construct counter-narratives of war.<sup>609</sup> Despite her partial presence in the surrender photograph, O'Farrell and her fellow Irish republican women used this image to assert her role in the revolution throughout the war and post-conflict period; demonstrating

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<sup>607</sup> McAtackney, '1916 and After', p. 58. Feminist art historians such as Kristen Frederickson have also challenged this trope of exceptionalism within the recovery of women into patriarchal narratives or canons, arguing that it frames women as anomalies rather than examples of a larger phenomenon. Kristen Frederickson, 'Introduction: Histories, Silences, Stories' in *Singular Women: Writing the Artist*, ed. by Kristen Frederickson and Sarah Webb (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 1-20, (p. 8).

<sup>608</sup> Agata Lisiak, 'Women in Recent Revolutionary Iconography', *What Do Ideas Do? IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference Proceedings*, XXXIII (2014), 1-14, p. 6.

<sup>609</sup> Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, p. 5. As Erika Hanna, drawing on the work of Joan Scott, has argued, the pervasive rhetoric of visibility and rediscovery overshadows the critical memory work done by marginalised groups outside of academia, which is only recognised and validated once it is co-opted into the historical establishment.

the photograph's re-emergence in the 2000s was not a rediscovery from oblivion, but the culmination of a process going back decades. Situating Ginestà's photograph within Guzmán's wider photographic corpus highlights how it derived from his candid, street photography of militiawomen during July 1936. Openly acknowledging this, and placing this iconic photograph in dialogue with Marina Ginestà's own photographic practices, would push back against the exceptional framing of this image and broaden the scope of the gendered narrative of war in Spain. Furthermore, the overwhelming focus on the modern discovery of these photographs enables another level of erasure: the erasure of feminist activists and historians who were critical in drawing attention to the marginalisation of militant women and demanding their inclusion within mainstream narratives of war. It is clear, then, that we must re-evaluate our approach to women's history in the public sphere. Despite the centrality of the rhetoric of hidden histories and discourses of representation within public history of gender and war, visibility alone does not address women's marginalisation. Unless it is accompanied by a significant disruption to the patriarchal war narrative, narratives of rediscovery and celebratory visibility will continue to maintain the selective hypervisibility of a minority of women at the expense of the widespread erasure of the majority.

Within public narratives of war, the re-emergence of iconic photographs of militant women and celebratory narratives of exceptionalism have provided a foundation to reshape the cultural memory of war, but as this chapter has demonstrated, it must be understood as the beginning of the process of recovery, not its apex. Redefining the cultural narratives of war in Ireland and Spain requires both an acknowledgement of the role of the state in marginalising and silencing women during and after conflict, and the construction of alternative narratives of war. While they have previously been used to control women's presence in state narratives of war, historical photographs of militant women also hold the potential to disturb and remake these narratives. This disruptive process is already in motion across Ireland and Spain, and in the next chapter, I will explore how street artists in present day Ireland and Spain are constructing alternative, feminist narratives of war through reimagining and adapting archival photographs of militant women.

## Chapter 5

### Remediating Archival Photographs: Street Art and Alternative Narratives of War, 2016-2020.



**Figure 5.1**, Coláiste Feirste, 'Is Féider Linn' (We Can), 2019, Belfast. Courtesy of Extramural Activity.

In a West Belfast mural, the mountainous frontlines of Spain merge into the streets of war-torn Dublin, and the sepia-toned forms of two women come together in a display of female strength and empowerment. Figure 5.1, a collaborative, feminist mural created by the pupils of the Irish-speaking Coláiste Feirste in 2019, sought to re-inscribe these two women, the Catalan Communist Marina Ginestà and the Irish nationalist Winifred Carney, into a male-dominated narrative of war that had previously erased these women. It did so through the remediation of archival photographs of these women, adapting and resituating them within a context that subverted and disrupted the patriarchal frameworks of war. Photographic remediation is the movement of an image between different forms of media, and in this chapter, I focus particularly on the adaption of historical photography into contemporary street art.<sup>610</sup> Clad in militaristic uniforms, with defiant looks on their faces, Ginestà and Carney step out from the background of history to take centre stage in this mural in a display of

<sup>610</sup> Merrill, p. 188. For more on the role of remediation within the dynamics of cultural memory see: Erll and Rigney, pp. 1-10 and Astrid Erll, 'Travelling Memory', *Parallax*, 17.4 (2011), 4-18, p. 12.

feminist visibility and recovery. In contrast to official sites of memory in Ireland and Spain, which remain dominated by men, this mural serves as a means of both commemorating and celebrating their participation, and engaging the viewer in the re-integration of women's experiences into cultural narratives of war.<sup>611</sup> However, as I have discussed throughout this thesis, visibility is not a static state but a continual process, and it is critical to question how militant women are made visible and why.

The comparative focus of the mural, which weaves the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War into a global narrative of feminist action, reflects a broader movement of challenging and rewriting narratives of war. Yet, while this mural seeks to defy the conventional, male-dominated narrative of war, the ways in which it frames these militant women simultaneously conforms to patriarchal understandings of women's militancy. As I discussed in the previous chapter, despite the implications of Guzmán's iconic photograph, Marina Ginestà was not a frontline combatant but an activist, interpreter and journalist. In Figure 5.1, however, she was explicitly remade into a militaristic soldier on the frontlines, disregarding the multiple realities of her own wartime participation and her own personal objections to being visualised as a militiawomen. Carney's depiction was based on a 1918 studio portrait, changing her formalwear to a Cumann na mBan uniform and placing her in front of a collective of anonymised, faceless militant women. While these women have been recovered into the mainstream narrative of war, in doing so, they have been iconised and framed as exceptional. The remediation of historical photographs solidifies and stabilises cultural memory scripts and enables the creation of feminist pasts, yet it also facilitates wider processes of erasure and reinforces patriarchal frameworks of women's militancy.<sup>612</sup>

In this chapter I examine how street artists operating in Ireland and Spain use public murals as catalysts to rewrite exclusionary narratives of war and 'unforget what has been overlooked'.<sup>613</sup> To do so, I explore how street artists harness the disruptive potential of these photographs to re-inscribe the marginalised experiences of women excluded from mainstream narratives of conflict.<sup>614</sup> Street art is a polyvalent term, encompassing multiple artistic forms

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<sup>611</sup> For a discussion on the dominance of masculinity in memory landscapes in Ireland and Spain see: Casserly and O'Neill, p. 24; Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, pp. 74-80.

<sup>612</sup> Red Chidgey, *Feminist Afterlives: Assemblage Memory in Activist Times* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 144.

<sup>613</sup> Rigney, 'Remaking Memory', p. 12. In this article, Rigney primarily focuses on literature and film as a tool for reshaping the past, however I expand on her conclusions by exploring street art, a form of unofficial creative intervention not considered in her analysis.

<sup>614</sup> The potential of street art in its multitude of forms to construct subaltern counter-narratives has been widely discussed in international contexts. For examples of this work see: Sarah Awad and Brady Wagoner, *Street Art of Resistance* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Alexis Cortés and Margot Olavarria, 'The Murals of La Victoria: Imaginaries of Chilean Popular Resistance', *Latin American Perspectives*, 43.5 (2016), 62-77; David Carey and

such as muralism, graffiti, and public performance.<sup>615</sup> In this study, however, I particularly focus on independently created public murals, as historically within Ireland and Spain they have acted as a venue to reinterpret the past and the present outside of spaces of official memory.<sup>616</sup> Building on my analysis of photography's role in state commemorations of militant women in Chapter 4, I compare four murals created in Dublin and Barcelona between 2016 and 2020, made respectively by the Irish artists Gearóid O'Dea and Emma Blake, the American muralists Sarah Painter and Cosby Hayes, and the Catalan street artist Roc BlackBlock. All four of these murals recreated and adapted historical photographs of militant women to craft alternative narratives of war that foregrounded women's participation. Within each case study, I trace how the artists adapted these historical images and mobilised them to engage the public in 'over-writing' exclusionary narratives of the Irish revolution and the Spanish Civil War.<sup>617</sup>

Nevertheless, while acknowledging the important roles of these murals in forging feminist narratives of war, I argue that through the reproduction or reinterpretations of historical photographs, these murals can in fact reinforce exclusionary patriarchal narratives of war. By remobilising existing visual frameworks of women's militancy, these murals unwittingly reproduce processes of erasure that have been continually imposed on women throughout conflict and its aftermath. Throughout this chapter, I examine how these murals function within the photographic afterlives of the images they remediate, departing from traditional analysis of these pieces as singular images.<sup>618</sup> In doing so, I locate these contemporary acts of remediation within the longer histories of photographic mediation and the negotiation of women's visibility in cultural memories of the Irish and Spanish conflicts. Through this approach, I problematise the alternative narratives constructed within street art, examining how their use of photographic remediation amplifies patriarchal conditions of

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Walter Little, 'Reclaiming the Nation through Public Murals: Maya Resistance and the Reinterpretation of History', *Radical History Review*, 106 (2010), 5-26; Laura Forster, 'Radical Commemoration, the Politics of the Street and the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Paris Commune of 1971', *History Workshop Journal*, 92.1 (2021), 1-24.

<sup>615</sup> Holly Eva Ryan, 'Political Street Art in Social Mobilization: A Tale of Two Protests in Argentina', in *The Aesthetics of Global Protest: Visual Culture and Communication*, ed. by Aidan McGarry, Itir Erhart, Hande Eslen-Ziya, Olu Jenzen and Umut Korkut (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), pp. 99-120, (p. 101).

<sup>616</sup> For more on the traditions of muralism in Ireland and Spain see: Bill Rolston, 'Politics, Painting and Popular Culture: The Political Wall Murals of Northern Ireland', *Media Culture and Society*, 9.1 (1987), 5-28; Rachael Young, '"We Can't Keep Painting Over Our Problems": Murals, Social Media, and Feminist Activism in Ireland", *Éire-Ireland*, 35.3-4 (2021), 320-45; Bill Rolston and Amaia Alvarez Berastegi, 'Exhuming Memory: Miguel Hernández and the Legacy of Fascism in Spain', *Race and Class*, 60.1 (2018), 38-60; Giulia Quaggio, 'Walls of Anxiety: The Iconography of Anti-NATO Protests in Spain, 1981-6', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 56.3 (2021), 693-719.

<sup>617</sup> Erll and Rigney, p. 2.

<sup>618</sup> As Sarah Awad and Bradley Waggoner argue, street art must be examined as part of a visual narrative that takes into account the past life of the image, the history of the icons constructing the piece, the images and narratives it contests, and the narratives re-inscribed through the image. Awad and Bradley, p. 10.

visibility, making some women visible while reinforcing the erasure of others. In doing so, I confront the challenge in disrupting and dismantling patriarchal narratives within contemporary, public understandings of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War.<sup>619</sup>

In the first case study of this chapter, I examine two murals created for International Women's Day in Ireland in 2016 by O'Dea and Blake. Coinciding with the Decade of Centenaries' mission to 'locate new narratives and question old certainties', O'Dea and Blake's murals adapted Constance Markievicz's revolutionary portraiture, discussed previously in Chapter 2, to reimagine feminist narratives of the past.<sup>620</sup> However, I argue that their reliance on the iconic figure of Markievicz continues to replicate the narratives of exceptionalism that has engendered the erasure of broader histories of Irish militant women. I consider this issue further in the second case study, where I explore two murals of Spanish militiawomen painted by the Americans Painter and Hayes, and the Catalan Roc BlackBlock. Both murals mobilised archival photography of Spanish militiawomen taken during the war to construct alternative narratives of war that celebrated women's active participation. Yet, while these murals aimed to recover women's militancy into the public narrative of war, they reproduced the established mythology of the singular, combative militiawoman. I argue, therefore, that while these four murals aimed to broker a new, feminist narrative of war in Ireland and Spain, the ways in which they made women visible inadvertently echoed earlier allegorical frameworks and ways of seeing militant women.

Throughout this chapter, I foreground the role of photographs in the construction of these alternative narratives of war. In doing so, it is necessary to consider *how* archival photographs re-enter the public sphere. In particular, I examine how the remediation of these photographs is influenced by the archival dynamics surrounding the original photograph—that is to say, where it was stored, whether it was published publicly prior to its remediation in street art, and in particular, whether it was digitised.<sup>621</sup> By drawing these murals into the broader photographic history of women's militancy, I will demonstrate that including street art and other reproductions into the photograph's multi-layered social biography adds nuance to how the memory of militant women is mediated through the public circulation of these photographs. Through this approach, I suggest that we are able to interrogate how the remediation of historical photographs can replicate and amplify the patriarchal conditions of

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<sup>619</sup> Hayes, p. 522.

<sup>620</sup> McAtackney, 'Public Memory, Conflict and Women', p. 102.

<sup>621</sup> Hanna, *Snapshot Stories*, pp. 238-40. As Erika Hanna has noted, the digitisation of the photographic archive has heralded new afterlives for many images, as the process of digitisation democratises access to the archive, allowing both iconic and almost-forgotten images to be accessed and engaged with by the public.

visibility imposed upon militant women. Ultimately, I argue that while street art holds the potential to interrupt and reshape public engagement with the past and bring forth alternative narratives, it can only do so as part of wider practices of challenging and re-writing the past.

### 5.1 ‘A Female Narrative of Revolution?’ Irish Militant Women in Contemporary Irish Street Art

In 2016, during the centenary celebrations of the Easter Rising, two pieces of street art were erected to celebrate International Women’s Day and commemorate women’s roles in the revolution. Gearóid O’Dea’s ‘Le Chéile I nGruaig’ (Together in the Hair) was a 35-foot-tall poster that was pasted onto in South George Street overnight on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 2016. It was a collage based on three photographs of women connected to the Easter Rising: Constance Markievicz, the iconic rebel and ICA commander; Grace Gifford Plunkett, the wife of Joseph Mary Plunkett who was one of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation of Independence; and Margaret Pearse, the mother of rebellion leader Patrick Pearse. A few weeks later, the Minaw Collective, a group of women street artists, unveiled their own collaborative mural in the Bernard Shaw pub, only a 15-minute walk from O’Dea’s piece. As with O’Dea’s work, this mural recreated and adapted a historical photograph of Markievicz originally shot by the Keogh Brothers studio in 1916. In doing so, the Minaw collective re-inscribed this archival image into the public narrative of the revolution as a way to recognise women’s participation and to highlight Markievicz’s role as a feminist, as well as a nationalist revolutionary. While creative interventions had been a core part of the Easter Rising commemorations, with projects like the Sackville Street Art Project engaging with community groups to recognise the 262 civilians who died as a result of the Easter Rising, these projects received less public attention than ‘Le Chéile I nGruaig’ and the Minaw Collective’s mural.<sup>622</sup> As the Irish journalist Una Mullally commented, both of these murals ‘reflect us...on walls and makeshift stages, the street art and poetry fizzing about the country is reflecting a female narrative of revolution’.<sup>623</sup> These murals resonated with the public desire to reclaim women’s histories of war, a commemorative drive also seen in the construction of widespread narratives of recovery around figures such as Elizabeth O’Farrell in 2016, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Yet, while ‘Le Chéile I nGruaig’ and the

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<sup>622</sup> Anne Goarzin, ‘The Rising Goes Digital: Century Ireland.ie’, *Études Irlandaises*, 42.2 (2017), 75-88, p. 87; McAuliffe et al, pp. 26-9.

<sup>623</sup> Una Mullally, ‘Why Women Have Risen to the Top in 1916 Lore’, *The Irish Times*, 28 March 2016, <<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/una-mullally-why-women-have-risen-to-the-top-in-1916-lore-1.2588986>> (accessed online, 21 October 2021).

Minaw Collective's mural constructed visual narratives that recognised women's participation, they did so by using familiar templates or cultural scripts.<sup>624</sup> Cultural scripts are recognisable, standardised re-workings of the past that emerge out of public discourse, and they are critical in determining what is remembered and what is overlooked within the public cultural memory.<sup>625</sup> Like earlier redefinitions of militant women's photographic practices, these cultural scripts positioned women's experiences of war within narratives of exceptionalism or domesticity, frameworks that do not account for the diversity and complexity of women's militancy in Ireland.

The limits of these representational frameworks can be seen within the position of Constance Markievicz in cultural narratives of war. Since her death in 1927, representations of Markievicz have oscillated between positioning her within the traditionally gendered framework of Irish nationalism and recognising her as a radical, transgressive figure. As I have shown throughout this thesis, visual representations of Markievicz have continuously been entangled within the drive to reconfigure her within normative gendered ideologies. This process began immediately after her death, as obituaries and memorials by conservative political parties such as Fianna Fáil diminished her political participation and militancy in favour of emphasising her charitable actions, characterising her in line with the gendered expectations of Catholic womanhood. While her republican and feminist peers contested this reframing of Markievicz, the Irish state maintained this process of domesticating and feminising Markievicz throughout the post-conflict period.<sup>626</sup> A similar process of feminisation occurred during the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, firstly when Republican militiawomen were redefined within narratives of normative femininity, and secondly in the post-conflict period, when positive representations of women could only be located within Catholic frameworks of femininity.<sup>627</sup> Disarmed, aestheticized or

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<sup>624</sup> Rigney, 'Remaking Memory', p. 13.

<sup>625</sup> Lindsay Dodd, 'Small Fish, Big Pond: Using Oral History Narrative to Reveal Broader Social Change', in *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject*, ed. by Joan Tumblety (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 34-50, (pp. 36-7).

<sup>626</sup> Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism*, p. 33. As Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Vera Mackie discuss, a particularly egregious example of how representations of Markievicz have been positioned within a sentimental, gendered framework is the 1998 'Poppet' statue in Dublin, which depicted her in a traditionally feminine dress alongside her dog, with no visible traces of militancy or political engagement.

<sup>627</sup> Rodríguez López and Cazorla Sánchez, p. 707.

mythologised, there is a tension in how iconic militant women are represented within the public sphere.

The representations of Markievicz in the Republic of Ireland contrast heavily with usage of her image in Northern Ireland, where she is one of the few female presences within a hyper-masculine narrative of nationalist conflict.<sup>628</sup> Since the creation of the state of Northern Ireland in 1921, murals have been highly-charged signifiers of territory, political sentiment, and violence. During the thirty year conflict of the Troubles, murals in Northern Ireland acted as a local, visual culture of war, and ethno-political murals retain this level of social threat, as demonstrated by the reaction to the 2022 mural by popular Irish-language rap group Kneecap which depicted a police car on fire.<sup>629</sup> In particular, nationalist murals have been used to mobilise support for dissident political organisations, rally support against the state and reaffirm political ideologies. Nevertheless, these murals also reproduce stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity, thereby reinforcing a patriarchal narrative of both the Troubles and the earlier Irish revolutionary period. On the walls of Belfast, women are rarely visualised as activists in their own right, with muralists instead mobilising them in the traditionally feminine roles of victims or caregivers—a continuation of how they were photographed during war. Even when depicted as activists, armed women, or political prisoners, their presence does not destabilise the embedded patriarchal narrative of war constructed within the visual landscape of Northern Ireland.<sup>630</sup> Markievicz's presence within Northern Irish murals frame her as a symbol of women's activism, connecting the Irish revolutionary movement of the early twentieth-century to both Irish republicanism during the thirty years of political violent and conflict of the Troubles, and contemporary struggles for independence.<sup>631</sup> As Sharon Crozier-De Rosa has noted, putting the face of a female revolutionary known for active participation in armed rebellion on the walls of Northern Ireland legitimised the ongoing participation of Irish women in political violence and resistance.<sup>632</sup> However, she has continually been positioned as an exceptional figure, pictured alone against a background of anonymous women, and this reinforces her as an anomaly

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<sup>628</sup> Sara McDowell, 'Commemorating Dead "Men": Gendering the Past and Present in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 15.4 (2008), 335-54, pp. 336-7.

<sup>629</sup> Bill Rolston, 'Re-imaging: Mural Painting and the State in Northern Ireland', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15.5 (2012), 447-66, p. 450. For further information on the Kneecap mural, see 'Irish Language Rappers Kneecap Unveil Mural of Burning PSNI Land Rover in West Belfast', *Belfast Telegraph*, 13 August 2022, <<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/irish-language-rappers-kneecap-unveil-mural-of-burning-psni-land-rover-in-west-belfast-41909958.html>>, accessed 27/8/2022.

<sup>630</sup> Debbie Lisle, 'Local Symbols, Global Networks: Rereading the Murals of Belfast', *Alternatives: Glocal, Local, Political*, 31.1 (2006), 27-52, pp. 41-2.

<sup>631</sup> Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism*, pp. 102.

<sup>632</sup> Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism*, pp. 102-4.

within the gendered frameworks of Irish nationalism.<sup>633</sup> While Markievicz's undeniable presence may suggest that women have been rewritten into visual narratives of conflict, her inclusion, as with the reproduction of iconic images of militiawomen in Spanish street art, signifies the selective nature of public memorialisation of women and the ways this serves to reproduce patriarchal narratives of war.<sup>634</sup>

This dichotomy has since been complicated by Markievicz's reclamation as a feminist figure in the Republic of Ireland. Across Ireland and Spain, archival photographs of militant women have been reproduced within feminist campaigns to reclaim women erased from public narratives of the past. In Spain, for example, groups such as the Feministes Anticapitalistes dels PPCC (Anticapitalist Feminists of the Catalan Countries), a collective organisation of Catalan anti-capitalist feminists, have drawn on the radical legacy of militiawomen by reproducing press photographs of militiawomen on stickers and posters to advertise strikes and protests for events such as International Women's Day. As Figure 5.2 shows, the Irish Repeal the Eighth movement for abortion rights has been particularly



**Figure 5.2**, Jim Fitzpatrick, 'Repeal the Eighth, Constance Markievicz', 2018.

<sup>633</sup> McAttackney, '1916 and After', p. 62.

<sup>634</sup> McDowell, p. 349.

prominent in reclaiming historical iconography in order to connect this contemporary movement to historical women's activism.<sup>635</sup> Jim Fitzpatrick's contribution to the Artist's Campaign to Repeal the Eighth, seen in Figure 5.2, directly adapted a historical photograph of Markievicz, where he replaced her ICA brooch with one supporting the Repeal movement—an adaption which 'fits neatly within the subversive narrative of her gendered, revolutionary activities'.<sup>636</sup>

This invocation of radical pasts to mobilise and justify contemporary activism has deep roots across both Irish and Spanish feminist history. For example, in twentieth-century Ireland, suffragists such as Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Markievicz used this tactic to create a historical continuity of feminist narratives, drawing on popular histories including the 1798 United Irishmen's Rebellion and the Irish Ladies Land League and foregrounding women's roles within these movements.<sup>637</sup> However, invocations of Markievicz within feminist iconography are complicated by her role in the nationalist political mythos, as well as her own complex relationship with feminism and revolutionary nationalism. For Markievicz, the cause of Irish independence trumped the need for suffrage and the broader feminist movement, a stance that complicated her relationships with other women in the feminist movement, and which continues to complicate depictions of Markievicz within contemporary Irish feminism. An iconic figure within the activist iconography of Ireland, there is nevertheless a tension in how she has been visualised, which echoes the difficulties of women's visibility discussed throughout this thesis.

This tension is also reflected in the contrasting dynamics of O'Dea and Blake's murals, both of which seek to commemorate Markievicz's participation in the war, and through her, recognise the broader roles of women in the revolution. Gearóid O'Dea's 'Le Chéile I nGruaig' was designed with the intent to 'reimagine the kind of Ireland we could live in' by highlighting the role of women in the Irish revolutionary narrative.<sup>638</sup> Using digitised archival

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<sup>635</sup> McAttackney, 'Where Are All the Women? Public Memory, Gender and Memorialisation in Contemporary Belfast', in *Heritage After Conflict: Northern Ireland*, ed. by Crooke, Elizabeth and Maguire, Tom (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 154-72, (p. 156).

<sup>636</sup> Kate Antosik-Parsons, 'A Body is a Body: The Embodied Politics of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Politics in Irish Art and Culture', in *Reproductive Justice and Sexual Rights: Transnational Perspectives*, ed. by Tanya Bahkru (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 33-58, (p. 40).

<sup>637</sup> Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'Anger, Resentment and the Limits of Historical Narratives in Protest Politics: The Case of Early Twentieth-Century Irish Women's Intersectional Movements', *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 5.1 (2021), 66-86, p. 70.

<sup>638</sup> Aoife Barry, 'This Amazing Mural of 1916 Just Appeared in Dublin City Centre', *The Journal*, 8 March 2016, <<https://www.thejournal.ie/mural-women-1916-dublin-georges-st-2647818-Mar2016>> (accessed 21 October 2021).

photographs available in public collections, O'Dea adapted three studio photographs of Markievicz, Gifford Plunkett, and Pearse into a single image, connected by their hair, with a pair of disembodied hands clutching an Irish flag below the women. O'Dea first used coloured pencils and gouache to draw the collage of the three women in his studio, before digitally scanning and reproducing it on a large scale for his installation, which was wheat pasted onto the side of a building. Unlike the photographs that provide the basis for the Spanish murals that I will discuss later in this chapter, this mural was based on studio portraits commissioned by the aforementioned women, a photographic practice that allowed women control over how they were visualised.<sup>639</sup> O'Dea's drawing of Markievicz was based on two portraits commissioned by her in 1916 and 1918. He adapted Pearse's portrait from a studio photograph of her taken in the 1920s, while his depiction of Gifford Plunkett was recreated from a postcard printed and distributed by Powell Press in 1916 as part of the 'Irish Revolutionaries' series..



**Figure 5.3,** Gearóid O'Dea, *Le Chéile* in Gruaig, 2016, Dublin

While the piece was widely praised at the time, it has since received critique from feminist academics such as Laura McAtackney for how it framed women's inclusion in the narrative of the Easter Rising, as it focused on already well-known figures within the mythology of the Irish revolution and reinforced them as passive symbols within the

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<sup>639</sup> Hanna, p. 84.

narrative of conflict.<sup>640</sup> In bringing together these three women—the revolutionary icon, the mourning mother, and the tragic bride—O’Dea hoped to bring a balance that would reflect the different ways in which women were involved in the Rising. Yet, it simultaneously reinforced the dominant representation of women as passive victims and bystanders in conflict, and omitted the influence of the Rising as the spark for these women’s continued political involvement. Markievicz, as I have discussed throughout this thesis, was a central figure in nationalist politics throughout the revolutionary period and the post-war period. After the execution of her sons Patrick and Willie, Margaret Pearse became an influential politician and campaigner, firstly for Sinn Féin and later for Fianna Fáil, who sought to maintain their legacies and the revolution for which they had died.<sup>641</sup> Grace Gifford Plunkett, whose story of marrying her imprisoned husband in Kilmainham Gaol in the hours before his execution had been widely circulated across the British and Irish press, had previously been active in the women’s suffrage movement and thereafter joined Cumann na mBan. She participated actively throughout the War of Independence, and in 1922, she was imprisoned for her role in the anti-Treaty movement during the civil war in the same prison where her husband had been executed six years earlier.<sup>642</sup> In this mural, O’Dea visualised Pearse and Gifford Plunkett not as active participants, but as ‘conduits for the experiences and tragedies of men’, while omitting the visual traces of Markievicz’s militancy in favour of representing her in a state of ‘contemplative passivity’.<sup>643</sup>

O’Dea’s mural belongs to a longer photographic tradition of redefining Markievicz through a passive, domestic lens, a connection that becomes apparent through framing this mural as part of the photographic afterlives of her revolutionary portraiture. While the depictions of Pearse and Gifford Plunkett drew from single photographs, his drawing of Markievicz was a montage of two images, which can be seen in Figure 5.4 and 5.5. Her face, with its contemplative, non-direct gaze, was reproduced from a studio portrait produced in 1918 by the Poole Studio in Dublin, which Markievicz then used for her 1918 election campaign for Sinn Féin. The black ostrich feathered hat, an aspect of Markievicz’s ICA uniform that mainstream British and Irish newspapers consistently parodied, was adapted from an earlier portrait series taken by the Keogh Brothers in 1916. Markievicz, Gifford Plunkett and Pearse originally commissioned these images as studio portraits before they were reproduced within revolutionary visual culture. As such, they reflect dominant ways of

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<sup>640</sup> McAtackney, ‘Public Memory, Conflict and Women’, pp. 110-11; McAtackney, ‘1916 and After’, pp. 62-3.

<sup>641</sup> Knirck, ‘Ghosts and Realities’, pp. 173-4; Hall, ‘Irish Republican Women in Australia’, p. 83.

<sup>642</sup> Gilligan, ‘Commemorating a Missing History’, p. 160.

<sup>643</sup> Barry, ‘This Amazing Mural’, n.p; McAtackney, ‘1916 and After’, p. 63

seeing women's militancy during war and the ways in which women negotiated these gendered frameworks.



**Figure 5.4**, A. Poole Studio, 'Constance Markievicz', 1918, Dublin. Courtesy of National Library of Ireland



**Figure 5.5**, Keogh Brothers Studio, 'Constance Markievicz', 1916, Dublin. Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.5 highlight the shifts in photographic representations of Markievicz, and reflect how she responded to the development of the nationalist narrative in Ireland. Markievicz had commissioned both images from popular photographic studios in Dublin, and they presented her through an explicitly militarised lens, though with different intensities. Shot in 1916, Figure 5.4 reflected how she 'sought to write herself into history', with the militaristic ICA uniform and rifle contrasting with the overt femininity of her ostrich feathered hat, and her classically feminine pose.<sup>644</sup> While Markievicz intended this image to demonstrate her revolutionary commitment by building off the existing tradition of women's portraiture that I discussed in Chapter 2, it did not circulate publicly as it did not align with the gendered narrative constructed within publications such as the *Catholic Bulletin*. In response to this, in 1918, Markievicz commissioned the Dublin-based Poole Studio for a second series of portraits that retained the militaristic aesthetic of her earlier series, but which tempered their transgressive nature through a more feminine presentation and styling. Posing

<sup>644</sup> Baylis, 'What to Wear', p. 94.

against a plain backdrop, the photographic framing of this image and her downturned gaze was more in line with visual frameworks of nationalist femininity, which positioned women within a maternal framework rather than as revolutionary soldiers. Figure 5.4 has been reproduced in several memorials to Markievicz. These include Séamus Murphy's 1954 bust in St. Stephen's Green, a commemorative stamp series in 1968, John Coll's 2003 statue in Sligo, and most recently in the 1916 Relative Association's poster campaign to celebrate the centenary of Irish women's suffrage. While McAttackney attests that O'Dea's mural presented Markievicz in 'an almost unknown form', this thesis has demonstrated how it in fact draws on a longer tradition of women negotiating and tempering their militant visibility in order to be seen.

Nevertheless, O'Dea's use of this image subverted Markievicz's intent in commissioning the portrait. Markievicz had deliberately produced a softer, more feminine-coded visual persona to gain greater public circulation for these images, but she continued to maintain her militant identity in these photographs, as she negotiated within the confines of the gendered narrative of Irish nationalism.<sup>645</sup> For example, she wore the militaristic uniform of the Fianna, a nationalist youth organisation that she set up in 1908 that trained young boys into a 'strong force to help in the liberation of Ireland'.<sup>646</sup> This process of negotiation is not present in O'Dea's rendition of the photographs. In reproducing the deliberately feminised aspects of Figure 5.4, such as Markievicz's averted gaze, but removing the visual traces of her militancy, O'Dea visualised her within the narrow dynamics of gendered nationalism. This is also seen in the adaption of Figure 5.4, as O'Dea removed the militaristic traces of the ICA uniform and the revolver but reproduced the feminine ostrich feather hat. While this mural sought to make women's participation in the Easter Rising visible, it did so in a way that perpetuated a longer photographic tradition of erasure. By locating this mural within the broader photographic histories of the images it reproduces, my study underscores the importance of critically examining *how* women are made visible and how certain narratives echo throughout conflict, its aftermath and in contemporary commemorations.

While O'Dea's mural maintained a narrative of domestic femininity as the condition for militant women's visibility, Emma Blake's mural of Markievicz, as seen in Figure 5.6, provides a different way of looking at women's militancy. Like Sarah Painter, Cosby Hayes and Roc BlackBlock's murals of Spanish militiawomen, Emma Blake's mural of Markievicz framed her

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<sup>645</sup> Baylis, 'What to Wear', p. 119.

<sup>646</sup> Marnie Hay, 'The Foundation and Development of Na Fianna Éireann, 1909-16', *Irish Historical Studies*, 36.141 (2008), 53-71, p. 55.

as an active participant that contrasts with O'Dea's more passive approach.



**Figure 5.6**, Minaw Collective, 'Minaw', 2016, Dublin. Courtesy of Emma Blake.

While Blake's mural of Markievicz situated her as a lone figure, the mural itself was an act of feminist collaboration by the all-female street art group Minaw Collective, which was founded by the Mexican artist Kathrina Rupit (KinMx) in 2012.<sup>647</sup> As a group, they aim to provide a positive and empowering place for women to participate in street art, and they have grown to be one of the most influential and popular collectives working across the north and south of Ireland. Their 2016 International Women's Day mural embodied their feminist ethos, as they wanted to celebrate an iconic woman and connect her to contemporary feminism in Ireland.<sup>648</sup> Unlike O'Dea's piece, which was created in a studio, the Minaw Collective's mural was painted directly on the walls of the Bernard Shaw pub during a street art jam, an open-air painting session that is open to the public. Six artists, Emma Blake, Laura Fitzpatrick, Kathrina Rupit, Jess Tobin, Vanessa Power, and Holly Pereira, collaborated to create the mural. Five of the artists painted the individual letters spelling out the name of the group in their own distinct aesthetic styles, while Emma Blake framed the piece with a reproduction of a 1916 studio portrait of Markievicz, which she adapted by removing the gun held by Markievicz and

<sup>647</sup> Bronwyn O'Neil, 'The Minaw Collective', *Evoke*, 27 May 2020, <https://evoke.ie/2020/05/27/inspire-women-in-business/the-minaw-collective>, [accessed 15 October 2021].

<sup>648</sup> Online interview with Emma Blake by author, July 2020.

replacing it with a spray-can, with the effect that it appeared as though Markievicz herself was tagging the wall.

Like O'Dea's mural, Blake's piece also reimagined Markievicz's revolutionary portraiture by reproducing a photograph by the Keogh Brothers from the same studio portrait session as Figure 5.4. This was one of the less prominent photographs produced in the session. It was only placed on public display in 2016 when 70 photographs from Sean Sexton's private collection were displayed in the Photographers Gallery in London. Curated by Luke Dodds, this exhibition on photography and the Easter Rising highlighted the diversity of photographic practices in Ireland between the late 1800s and the mid twentieth century; as it exhibited reportage and press photography, studio portraits, landscapes, postcards, amateur snapshots and scrapbooks. However, the publicity surrounding this exhibit focused on the display of what were described as previously unseen photographs of Irish revolutionaries, and newspapers across Ireland and Britain reproduced the photograph of Markievicz seen in Figure 5.7.<sup>649</sup> In the process of researching about Markievicz, Blake found an article containing photographs of this exhibition, and decided to use and adapt this photograph to fit the needs of her mural design.<sup>650</sup> By remaking this photograph outside of the institutional spaces of the archive and the gallery, Blake opened up the portrait to the public, giving it the public circulation and audience that had been lacking during Markievicz's lifetime.

Defying the genre norms of studio portraiture, Figure 5.7 was a full body shot of Markievicz clad in the masculine ICA uniform, with her black ostrich feather hat contrasting against the militaristic masculinity of her clothing. Shot in profile with her face turned away from the viewer, the photograph drew attention to her masculine stance and confident handling of the revolver, which is representative of how Markievicz sought to craft a revolutionary image that challenged the fixed, gendered dynamics of Irish nationalism. However, the photographic markers in this image created a disjuncture between Markievicz and the scene she attempted to depict.<sup>651</sup> Like the other images in the Keogh Brother's studio session in 1916, Markievicz was photographed in front of an illustrative backdrop with a pastoral scene, the details faded in comparison with the relative sharpness of Markievicz herself. It was bordered with Celtic patterns that stood out sharply against her breeches and boots, undermining the martial tone composed in Markievicz's stance and costuming.

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<sup>649</sup> Dennis Staunton, 'Rare 1916 Rising Photographs to Go on Display in London', *Irish Times*, 18 January 2016, <<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/rare-1916-rising-photographs-to-go-on-display-in-london-1.2499947>> (accessed 26 November 2021).

<sup>650</sup> Interview with Emma Blake, July 2020.

<sup>651</sup> Baylis, 'What to Wear', p. 103; p. 106.



**Figure 5.7**, Keogh Brothers, ‘Constance Markievicz’, 1916, Dublin. Courtesy of the Sean Sexton Collection.

Additionally, in line with the genre conventions of studio portraiture, the Keogh Brothers edited and re-toasted Markievicz’s image with masking fluid that brightened up her face and hid any blemishes and wrinkles. While the most obvious adaption between this photograph and Blake’s mural was the replacement of the revolver with the spray-can, Blake also removed these photographic markers in the process of remaking this image. In removing the photographic markers, it also removed the traces of women’s photographic agency, their ability to ‘look and act on that looking in a way that redressed gender inequality’, in how they deliberately constructed and commissioned these photographs.<sup>652</sup>

The final result, as seen in Figure 5.8, was a striking and a powerful statement of women’s undeniable presence in historical narratives. Contrasting with the bright colours of the letters, Blake painted Markievicz in monochrome tones that reinforced the historicity of the photographic inspiration, a technique also used by Roc BlackBlock in his own street art. Blake’s piece, however, played with the temporal nature of the reproduction.

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<sup>652</sup> Fleckenstein, p. 2.



**Figure 5.8**, Emma Blake, 'MINAW', 2016, Dublin. Courtesy of Emma Blake.

By replacing the revolver with a modern spray-can that unleashed a brightly coloured ink, Blake's remediation of the image connected Markievicz to the bright future of Irish feminism represented by the remainder of the mural. The spray-can embedded Markievicz into the fabric of the piece, as if she were tagging the wall with the word 'Minaw'—a phonetic transcription of the Irish word *mná*, meaning woman. Furthermore, Blake's piece drew attention to an under-examined aspect of women's militant activism in revolutionary Ireland, namely their use of street art and graffiti as a tool of protest. During the clandestine, guerrilla warfare of the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War, women were active in pasting up political posters and painting propagandistic slogans on the city walls of Dublin and other Irish cities, an activity fraught with risk that was, nevertheless, broadly dismissed by their male compatriots.<sup>653</sup>

In remaking Markievicz as a street artist, Blake's mural re-connected women's historical practices of activism with contemporary feminist protest; retaining Markievicz's identity as a militant while disengaging her from frameworks of male-coded combat. By removing the gun and visually reframing her within a mural that celebrated International Women's Day, Blake thus positioned Markievicz as a symbol of feminist activism, rather than as a romanticised heroine. Blake's street art defied the dichotomous approach common to visual representations

<sup>653</sup> Louise Ryan, *Gender, Identity and the Irish Press*, p. 218.

of Markievicz. Unlike O'Dea's mural, it did not redefine her within a framework of passive and domestic femininity, yet neither did it represent her as an anomalous symbol of militant femininity within an overwhelmingly masculine narrative of war, a representation trend present in Northern Irish murals of Markievicz.<sup>654</sup> In remaking the image in this way, Blake deconstructed how women's militancy has been defined and remembered within the popular memory of the Irish revolutionary period. Specifically, she addressed how recognition of women's activism relies on their compliance with the dominant narrative of masculine violence and conflict, which erases the multifarious and complex dynamics of women's militancy. Yet, while this act of remediation enabled Blake to go beyond the traditional frameworks of representing Irish militant women, when applied to Markievicz in particular, this adaption of the photograph and the removal of the traces of violence in the image becomes more problematic.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, the redefinition of the Easter Rising within a Catholic framework divorced the uprising and its leaders from their radical socialist and feminist roots. Markievicz's role in the Irish suffrage movement and her feminist activism has frequently been overshadowed by her participation in Irish nationalism. As Mary Cullen argues,

A woman like Markievicz may be seen as part of Irish history when she is participating in nationalist or labour political or military activity. She and other women are *not* seen as part of Irish history when they campaign in support of women's claims for civil and political rights.<sup>655</sup>

Blake's piece reinstated Markievicz into the narrative of Irish feminism, and she redefined a photograph previously seen only in terms of its nationalist message to reclaim Markievicz as a feminist activist. This act of remediation thus challenged the continuum of erasure that has surrounded Markievicz's feminism, wherein her role in women's suffrage has been overshadowed by her political nationalism. Furthermore, it destabilised her role as the singular female presence in the Irish revolutionary narrative, as it used her status as a revolutionary icon to call out the repudiation and neglect of women under the post-conflict, nationalist state. Rather than display her radicalism through masculine-coded violent action, Blake reimagined Markievicz within the framework of contemporary feminism's methods,

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<sup>654</sup> This mode of representation has been thoroughly discussed, see Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie, *Remembering Women's Activism*, pp. 31-33.

<sup>655</sup> Mary Cullen, 'How Radical was Irish Women's Feminism Between 1860 and 1920', quoted in Rebecca Pelan, *Two Irelands: Literary Feminisms North and South* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), p. 23.

drawing on the strong history of street art as politicised action and protest.<sup>656</sup> Within the mural, Markievicz's tagging was a direct statement on the omission of women's experiences of the revolution. Through this composition, Blake exposed the disruptive potential of the photograph, mobilising it to punctuate the present and redefine Markievicz outside of the hyper-masculine narrative of revolutionary violence and sacrifice. Yet, this destabilisation is in itself complex, particularly in relation to Markievicz's own relationship with violence, feminism and nationalism, and her revolutionary photographic practices.

The complexity can be traced back to Markievicz's participation in the early twentieth-century feminist and nationalist movements, which were entangled within a complicated dynamic.<sup>657</sup> While Markievicz was a committed suffragist, who participated in the Irish Women's Franchise League, delivered speeches, acted in political plays, and took part in radical action and protest, she argued that women's civil rights and liberties would accompany a nationalist revolution, and that suffrage must not overtake nationalist demands for an independent republic.<sup>658</sup> Furthermore, while popular narratives of feminism frequently overlook direct action and militant violence in favour of liberal, constitutional narratives of heroic progress, violence was integral to Markievicz's feminist ideology and rhetoric.<sup>659</sup> Markievicz deliberately cultivated a persona connected to revolutionary violence, as she called on women to 'dress suitably in short skirts... and buy a revolver' and to 'arm yourselves with weapons to fight your nation's cause'.<sup>660</sup> She drew on a mythic narrative of an ancient Irish past to justify women's active participation in violent, revolutionary activism, constructing an ancestry of ancient warrior women that framed women's defiance of gendered norms as part of the reclamation of Irish tradition.<sup>661</sup> For Markievicz, violence, nationalism and feminism were inextricably intertwined, and she used her photographic practices to visualise these intersections: the revolver in Figure 5.6 was both a declaration of her readiness to fight for Irish independence, but also a declaration of her feminism and defiance of the patriarchal gendered order. The removal of the revolver in favour of the spray thus redefined Markievicz's feminism within contemporary expectations and understandings of feminist action. While Blake's piece unmistakably challenged the collective erasure of militant women from mainstream narratives of the Irish revolution, when this visual framework was applied to

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<sup>656</sup> Forster, p. 3.

<sup>657</sup> Hearne, p. 2.

<sup>658</sup> Arrington, pp. 50-5.

<sup>659</sup> Chigney, p. 71.

<sup>660</sup> Ward, *In Her Own Voice*, p. 30; pp. 45-7.

<sup>661</sup> Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, p. 219.

Markievicz, it removed the complex nuances of her activism and political beliefs. In doing so, the Minaw Collective's mural continued to frame Markievicz as an icon of the revolution, rather than a complex historical actor; a process also seen in the use of iconic photographs to recover militant women, as I discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>662</sup>

Blake's removal of the revolver also reflects a wider issue concerning the erasure of women's photographic agency within public narratives of war. Within these photographic portraits, Markievicz constructed her own idealised vision of Irish nationalist femininity that actively subverted patriarchal gendered roles. As an artist and performer, Markievicz was aware of the power of the visual to enable women to define their public personas and carve out a space in the public, political sphere. Markievicz used photographs to embody a subversive performance of female agency, balancing traditionally feminine poses and stances against militaristic props, which directly challenged assumptions of women's subordinate roles and their passivity in the upcoming revolution.<sup>663</sup> In removing the revolver in her remediation of the photograph, Blake also removed Markievicz's transgressive intent and her defiance of gendered norms. While Blake's mural reimagined Markievicz within a feminist narrative of the revolution, the redefinition of Markievicz and the removal of the visual signifiers of violence that she deliberately included in the photograph repeated the processes of erasure that has continually been imposed onto her. The reluctance to engage with women's violence, which historically had prompted the deliberate erasure and redefinition of militant women during war in both Ireland and Spain, echoes throughout these murals. Within Blake's mural, Markievicz was not framed as a passive figure, as she was in Gearóid O'Dea's mural, however, both works continue a practice of redefining women's militant identities as a way to remove their connections to violent political action.<sup>664</sup>

As I have demonstrated through these case studies, street artists have remade the established meanings and uses of historical photography to construct alternative narratives of war that challenge the absence of women in the mythology of the Irish Revolution. This remediation of historical photographs challenges the boundaries of the archive and public narratives of the past, as it ruptures linear narratives by bringing visual remnants of the past into the present. This process of reimagining opens up the scope of public narratives of war,

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<sup>662</sup> Merrill, p. 113

<sup>663</sup> Kate Antosik-Parsons, 'Visualising the Spirit of Freedom: Performing Irish Women's Citizenship and Autonomy in Amanda Coogan's *Floats in the Aether*', *Review of Irish Studies in Europe*, 3.2 (2020), 126-45, p. 128.

<sup>664</sup> As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, there remains a discomfort with violent women within feminist politics and ideologies, and these two pieces demonstrate that this is still a factor in how militant women are remembered today.

and these murals contain the potential to challenge the masculine dominance of the revolution in popular memory. However, O'Dea and Blake's artistic interventions provoke a wider question. In a year when feminist historians, community groups, and public museums have focused on diversifying the revolutionary narrative and actively including the experiences of so-called undiscovered women into public narratives of war, why did these murals represent only well-known, iconic women? As Laura McAttackney has argued, the focus on supposedly extraordinary women neglects the experiences of the collectives of rank-and-file militants, whose memories of war were often not photographed or preserved in institutional archives.<sup>665</sup> The continued recirculation of only iconic imagery thus further embeds women within the margins of public narratives of war. This clash between recreating the experiences of iconic and ordinary women is also present within Spanish street art, where hagiographic murals of iconic figures such as Marina Ginestà contrast against recreations of historical photographs of anonymous militiawomen. In the next case study, I will examine how street artists in Spain have grappled with this dynamic, and explore how the American muralists Sarah Painter and Cosby Hayes, and the Catalan street artist Roc BlackBlock use both iconic imagery and previously unpublished photography to open up a space for women within contemporary narratives of the Spanish Civil War.

## 5.2 Painting the Collective Memory: Challenging Patriarchal Narratives of War in Contemporary Spanish Street Art

In 2006, the governing Spanish Socialist Party declared that the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish Civil War would be a 'Year of Historical Memory', and they drove forward legislation that recognised and publicly commemorated Republican victims of war and dictatorship, opened archives, and funded memorial projects and exhumations.<sup>666</sup> This resurgence of historical memory prompted a growth in public interest in the participation of women in the Spanish Civil War, as seen by the rise in popular and academic literature, exhibitions, documentaries, and fiction dedicated to the participation of women in the civil war.<sup>667</sup> As in Ireland, photography has been a popular vehicle to re-visualise women's marginalised experiences. In 2020, the Reina Sofia Museum unveiled a new gallery that focused on women's artistic and militant participation within the war, while in 2021, Gonzalo

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<sup>665</sup> McAttackney, '1916 and After', p. 58.

<sup>666</sup> Carolyn Boyd, 'The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617.1 (2008), 133-48, p. 144.

<sup>667</sup> Martínez Rus, pp. 11-2.

Berger and Tània Balló opened the Museo Virtual de la Mujer Combatiente (Virtual Museum of Combatant Women), which brought together archival photography, military files, arrest records, and oral histories to re-identify anonymous militiawomen. Outside of these institutional spaces of memory, street artists in Spain have also reproduced archival photographs to generate alternative narratives of war. In February 2020, the American muralists Sarah Painter and Cosby Hayes, and the Catalan street artist Roc BlackBlock painted two separate murals in Barcelona that represented this renewed drive to recognise women's presence in the Civil War. Sarah Painter and Cosby Hayes, operating under the tag SPCH Walls, produced a largescale mural of Marina Ginestà in the Horta Guinardó neighbourhood of Barcelona, which was adapted from Guzmán's photograph discussed in Chapter 4. A few weeks later, Roc BlackBlock unveiled his own mural of an anarchist militiawoman in the Gracià district of the city. While Painter and Hayes' mural recreated the iconic figure of Marina Ginestà, who is emblematic of the commemorative drive to rediscover women in contemporary Spain, Roc BlackBlock's piece aimed to provide a supposedly more authentic alternative to the myth of Spanish women's militancy represented by Ginestà by remaking a lesser-known photograph.<sup>668</sup> Both of these works independently reinforced the patriarchal conditions of visibility imposed on militant women during war, like with the Irish murals discussed in the previous case study. Working with a corpus of photographs that visualised militant women as spectacles, these murals reflect an aestheticized image of women's militancy that framed women as symbols. Thus, while these murals aimed to provide a new way of seeing women's militancy, they struggle to break free from the historical processes of erasure and delegitimisation embedded within these photographs.

Street art has a long history within Spain, where it has often been a tool of protest and communication during times of social turbulence and upheaval. Despite women's roles as producers of street art from the Civil War, to the dictatorship, to contemporary Spain, they remain commonly seen as the subjects rather than creators of murals.<sup>669</sup> This perspective, however, undermines women's active involvement in street art throughout war and dictatorship. Spanish militant women were critical in distributing posters, leaflets, and painting political slogans on city walls, while artists such as Juana Francisca Rubio produced political

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<sup>668</sup> Unknown, 'La Kasa de la Muntanya Replica Dones del 36 amb una Altra Miliciana', *L'Independent de Gràcia*, <<https://www.independent.cat/noticia/39552/la-kasa-de-la-muntanya-replica-dones-del-36-amb-una-altra-miliciana>> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>669</sup> Jonna Tolonen, 'Resistance to Violence Against Women on Spanish Walls', *Visual Communication*, 2021.

art and propaganda directed at women within the art collective La Gallofa.<sup>670</sup> Women continued these practices in the aftermath of war, where they used graffiti and street art to protest against the Francoist regime, and record their presence against the erasure imposed on them.<sup>671</sup> As the Francoist state opened up in the 1960s, political street art contesting Francoist ideologies and power became a more frequent sight on the streets of Spain.<sup>672</sup> Building on the work of women within the anti-Francoist movement, women within the Spanish feminist movement adopted street art as a critical tool within their activist practices.<sup>673</sup> Its importance is particularly evident in organisations such as the Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres (Women's Democratic Movement), formed in 1965, which used grassroots mobilisation and graffiti to protest against the repressive gendered ideologies of the Francoist dictatorship and demand systemic change.<sup>674</sup> After the transition to democracy, feminist street art intersected with other grassroots movements and protests, such as anti-war activism and the 1980s anti-NATO movement, which used political murals to illustrate opposition to American militarism.<sup>675</sup> In these murals, both male and female artists represented women as active participants in protests in an illustration of women's agency and presence within Spanish countercultural narratives.<sup>676</sup>

This focus on the role of women as symbols is not unique to Spain, however within the context of street art, a clear example of this tendency to omit women's contribution to artistic cultures can be traced back to the Civil War and the dominance of the symbol of the militiawoman. During the conflict itself, images of sexualised Spanish militiawomen were circulated across the public sphere in a multitude of forms, from political poster art to murals and installations.<sup>677</sup> For example, Figure 5.8 shows an example of a piece of public street art created during the Spanish Civil War by a group of youths in Madrid on behalf of the Socorro Rojo Internacional (Red Aid International), which reproduced a photograph of a militiawoman previously published in the illustrated magazine *Crónica*. The S.R.I was the

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<sup>670</sup> Pilar Domínguez Prats, 'Memories of War and Exile: Two Autobiographical Narratives of Exiled Women', in *Memory and Cultural History of the Spanish Civil War: Realms of Oblivion* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 467-92, (p. 474).

<sup>671</sup> Verónica Sierra Blas, *Cartas Presas: La Correspondencia Carcelaria en la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2016), pp. 85-91.

<sup>672</sup> Jonna Tolonen, "Whatever I Can Do to Put Those People in Jail": Crisis Turns Spanish Artists to Street Activism', in *Political Graffiti in Critical Times: The Aesthetics of Street Politics*, ed. by Ricardo Campos, Andrea Pavoni and Yiannis Zaimakis (New York: Berghahn, 2017), pp. 52-73, (pp. 52-3).

<sup>673</sup> Lyman G. Chafee, *Political Protest and Street Art: Popular Tools for Democratization in Hispanic Countries* (London: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 12.

<sup>674</sup> Francisco Arriero Ranz, 'El Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres: Del Antifranquismo a la Movilización Vecinal y Feminista', *Historia, Trabajo y Sociedad*, 2 (2011), 33-62, p. 44.

<sup>675</sup> Quaggio, p. 693.

<sup>676</sup> Quaggio, p. 707; p. 715.

<sup>677</sup> Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 50-1.

Communist equivalent of the International Red Cross, which was built on the concept of women's international solidarity, and it provided funds, support and welfare to the Republican side during the Civil War.<sup>678</sup> Using clay and coloured plaster, the group of youths created this collaborative mural in order to raise funds for the S.R.I, and they adopted the emblematic symbol of the militiawoman to garner more publicity for their fundraiser.



**Figure 5.8**, Foto Vídeo, 'Street Art in Madrid', *Crónica*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1936. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

The use of this figure is, however, ironic. While the S.R.I embraced the use of the militiawoman as an iconographical tool to attract publicity and funds to the organisation, they opposed women's presence within the front, and they enforced a rigidly gendered framework of participation within their own organisation. As with press photography and propaganda, street art transformed militant women into allegorical symbols that overshadowed the realities of women's engagement with war and the difficulties they faced in disrupting the established gender order. The militiawoman in Figure 5.8 represented a fantasy of war that would

<sup>678</sup> Laura Branciforte, 'Legitimando la Solidaridad Femenina Internacional: El Socorro Rojo', *Arenal*, 16.1 (2009), 27-52, p. 35.

dominate how the public perceived Spanish militant women throughout and after the conflict.<sup>679</sup> Within the commemorative landscape of contemporary Spain, this aestheticized ideal of militant womanhood re-emerged within both official memorials and public street art.



**Figure 5.9**, Sarah Painter and Cosby Hayes, 'Marina Ginestà', 2020, Barcelona.  
Courtesy of SPCH Walls.

There is a tension within this art relating to how images of women reinforce patriarchal ideologies while retaining the visual illusion of empowerment, which is also reflected in representations of Constance Markievicz in Irish street art. This tension can be clearly seen in Sarah Painter and Cosby Hayes' 2020 mural of the iconic militant Marina Ginestà.

Of the four murals discussed in this chapter, Figure 5.9 was the most spontaneous piece of work, with the process of researching and designing the mural notably shorter in comparison to O'Dea, Blake and Roc BlackBlock's pieces. In February 2020, the American artists Sarah Painter and Cosby Hayes painted an open wall with their recreation of Juan Guzmán's photograph of Marina Ginestà while they were in Spain on holiday. The pair first heard about Ginestà on a public history tour in Barcelona, where their imagination was immediately sparked by the story of the iconic photograph taken of her, how she was

<sup>679</sup> Brothers, pp. 76-8.

forgotten in the aftermath of the war, and her rediscovery in the 2000s.<sup>680</sup> Their piece was only active for a few months before the wall was re-painted by a different artist. Despite this, their work was widely photographed and circulated across the press and social media, and it introduced an international audience to the Communist militant Marina Ginestà. Like O'Dea's mural 'Le Cheile I nGruaig', it drew praise for directly celebrating women's involvement in conflict. Nevertheless, Painter and Hayes' mural also parallels O'Dea's piece in terms of its focus on well known, revolutionary icons, which detracted from their attempts to reframe the public narrative of women's role in the Spanish Civil War. Painter and Hayes' celebratory mural reflected the dominance of Ginestà as an icon within the Spanish Civil War, and particularly the way in which Ginestà has emerged as the symbol of women's active participation within the Spanish Civil War. Despite Ginestà's own ambivalence about her fame and symbolic role within the public narratives of the Spanish Civil War, the commemorative landscape of Barcelona has reproduced Ginestà's image across plaques, memorials and public art works; a framing that overlooks Ginestà's own participation within war as an activist and journalist to instead visualise her within the mythic narrative of the *militiana*.

Painter and Hayes met at the University of Florida while studying fine art, and began painting murals together in 2017, creating art in the United States, as well as internationally through participation in street art festivals and independent projects. They frame their murals as part of their political activism, by using archival and historical images to reimagine public narratives of the past and re-centre marginalised voices in order to construct public messages of solidarity and collective unity, and to advocate for resistance against right-wing ideologies and injustice.<sup>681</sup> In particular, they focus on making their murals site-specific by drawing inspiration from local histories of activism, and adopting themes and iconography that will resonate with the public and allow for greater engagement with their art—a process also reflected within Roc BlackBlock's artistic practices. Sarah Painter explicitly frames her work through a feminist lens, and she focuses on painting female figures, particularly drawing from myths and icons from local communities, in order to challenge the domination of masculinity in public art.<sup>682</sup>

Street art condenses complex narratives into a singular image, and through its association with particular political narratives and the aesthetic properties of the image, it is

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<sup>680</sup> Online interview with Sarah Painter by the author, June 2020.

<sup>681</sup> Interview with Sarah Painter, June 2020,

<sup>682</sup> Interview with Sarah Painter, June 2020.

able to effectively evoke particular emotional and political messages.<sup>683</sup> Juan Guzmán's 1936 photograph of Marina Ginestà, seen in Figure 5.10, has become a potent symbol within the commemorative visual culture of the Spanish Civil War. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, Guzmán's photograph rendered Ginestà into a revolutionary metaphor, and contemporary reproductions of this image have furthered this aesthetic and political messaging by framing her as a representation of all combatant women. In recreating the revolutionary aesthetic of Guzman's photograph, Painter and Hayes drew on the narratives encapsulated within the image in order to comment on the centrality of women within revolutionary movements, with a view to constructing a feminist narrative of war. By painting Ginestà on the walls of Barcelona, Painter and Hayes both disrupted the male-centric narrative of the Spanish Civil War and directed the public's attention to the comparative absence of physical monuments dedicated to women.



**Figure 5.10**, Juan Guzmán, 'Marina Ginestà', 1936, Barcelona. Courtesy of Agencia EFE.

Further to this, Painter and Hayes used their remediation of the photograph of Ginestà as a 'performative guide' that transmitted a narrative of international solidarity.<sup>684</sup> Their mural framed Ginestà as a model to inspire a collective resistance against the global resurgence of authoritarian and fascist ideologies; explicitly connecting Francoist Spain with

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<sup>683</sup> Karin Becker, 'Icons of Protest in the Visual Culture of the News', in *Screening Protest: Visual Narratives of Dissent Across Time, Space and Genre*, ed. by Alexa Robertson, (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 121-48, (p. 128)

<sup>684</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, p. 12.

the far-right policies of the United States under Donald Trump. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Guzmán's photograph of Ginestà holds a rich cultural currency, and it has been adapted into both anti-fascist messaging, such as Painter and Hayes' mural, and feminist themes, as seen by the use of the photograph in the Coláiste Feirste mural discussed at the beginning of this chapter. This messaging derives from the established mythos surrounding Ginestà, which has collapsed the historical and biographical context of the photograph and transformed Ginestà into a detached allegory for revolution within commemorative narratives of the Spanish Civil War. Painter and Hayes' caption of the image on Instagram, which positioned Ginestà as a transnational, revolutionary icon, underscores this adoption of Ginestà into a revolutionary symbol:

Our mural depicts Marina Ginestà, the 17-year-old anti-fascist  
photographer and translator who volunteered to report on the  
Resistance movement in Barcelona against Franco's Fascist Coup.  
Given the recent resurgence of nationalism and rise of fascist  
ideologies across the globe we thought it appropriate to highlight an  
incredibly dedicated revolutionary and member of the international  
left. As citizens of the United States we see many parallels between  
Franco's reactionary authoritarianism and the Trump Administrations  
tactics and tendencies. Our mural is both a tribute and a testament to  
our resistance against this type of hate; a display of solidarity, and a  
demonstration of the power held in our collective love.

In the process of adapting the photograph for the mural, Painter and Hayes adjusted the image for modern appeal and consumption. Guzmán's photograph depicted Marina Ginestà within the photographic frameworks of gendered revolutionary symbolism, drawing on an established tradition of iconographical representations of women in times of war and revolution. Painter and Hayes' mural reinforced this representation of Ginestà as an aestheticized, allegorical symbol, but they also visually adapted the image to align with contemporary expectations of women's militancy, with Ginesta wearing a modern, khaki uniform as opposed to the blue workers overalls more common during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>685</sup> Painted on a 4-metre high wall with bright, eye-catching colours, Ginestà's striking expression was designed to captivate and engage the passing spectators. They replaced the cityscape backdrop of the original photograph, which featured iconic Barcelona landmarks,

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<sup>685</sup> A further discussion on the transnational tropes of women's militancy in visual culture can be found in Gordon, p. 67.

with a plain, red background against which Ginestà stood out more prominently. Their aesthetic adaptions ensured that Ginestà was the sole focus of the piece, which created the potential for increased public engagement both on the street and as the image was circulated on digital platforms such as Instagram.<sup>686</sup>

However, this placement also dislocated her from the geographical and historical context of her militancy. Beyond removing the backdrop of Barcelona, Painter and Hayes also replaced the likely dark blue workers overalls worn by Ginestà with a khaki green uniform more reminiscent of modern warfare.<sup>687</sup> While their caption to this mural referred to Ginestà as a translator and journalist, their mural did not visually reference this role, as Painter and Hayes removed the camera bag that marked Ginestà as a journalist to instead draw focus on the rifle on her back. In doing so, they aimed to construct a clearer message of gender-defying revolutionary participation, but they also reinforced patriarchal narratives of women's militancy. Like the practices of international and national photojournalists during war, Painter and Hayes visualised Ginestà through the lens of the mythic, female revolutionary, a framework that reduces the complexity of women's militancy.

As well as these large-scale changes between Guzmán's photograph and the mural, there were also more subtle adaptions that must be considered when approaching this mural as part of the photograph's afterlife. In particular, the mural depicted Ginestà with a weary, battle-hardened look on her face that made her appear more mature than the teenager photographed by Guzmán. This aesthetic decision gave Painter and Hayes' mural a sense of grit and realism that was not present in the symbolic tone of Guzmán's photograph, rendering her not only a revolutionary icon, but also a symbol of perseverance against the contemporary rise of far-right authoritarianism. In their discussion of iconic images, Robert Hariman and John Lucaites argue that through artistic remediation 'one can discern how the features of the original image have been selected, ignored, rejected, amplified...and otherwise loaded with intentions, ideas, emotions'.<sup>688</sup> While both O'Dea and Blake's murals of

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<sup>686</sup> Lachlan McDowell and Poppy de Sourza, "I'd Double Tap That!": Street Art, Graffiti and Instagram Research', *Media, Culture and Society*, 40.1 (2018), 3-22, p. 5.

<sup>687</sup> The practise of colourising historical photography, particularly within popular history or public-facing projects such as these murals, has received criticism on the lack of critical insight into how colour, or lack thereof, shaped the ways in which photographs were shot and edited. Colourisation is frequently linked to calls to make the past visible in the present, undermining the historicity of the photograph. For more see: Elizabeth Edwards, 'The Colour of Time: A New History of the World, 1850-1960', *History of Photography*, 43.3 (2019), 331-2.

<sup>688</sup> Hariman and Lucaites, p. 288.

Markievicz rejected her association with violence, within Figure 5.9, the combative features of the original photograph were amplified, contributing to a visual, patriarchal framework of women's militancy based in masculine definitions of combat.<sup>689</sup> Beyond the removal of non-combative signifiers of militancy and the increased focus on her rifle, however, Painter and Hayes' adaptions to the image also detached it from its staged context, framing Ginestà as an actual combatant—a trend also observed in the Belfast mural discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the need to reactivate the disruptive potential of Guzmán's photograph. In using this image as a basis for their mural, Painter and Hayes seemingly mobilised the subversive undercurrent within this image to challenge masculine-dominated narratives of the Spanish Civil War. This construction of an alternative narrative drew wide acclaim both online and from local residents and other artists, who particularly appreciated that the international artists knew and were actively paying homage to Ginestà and her role in the conflict.<sup>690</sup> However, when approaching this mural as part of the afterlife of the Guzmán photograph, it is clear that it continues to replicate a reductive narrative of women's militancy that does not address the complexities of their participation and their erasure. Painter and Hayes do not engage with the complex history of this photograph as a staged image—indeed, their adaptions to the photograph instead try to add a sense of war-like authenticity to the mural. These adaptions to this image frame Ginestà as an empowering symbol of revolution, yet this means of being made visible must be approached with nuance. Like the Irish murals discussed earlier in this chapter, Painter and Hayes illustrated the 'histories of the perception of what happened rather than histories of what actually happened'.<sup>691</sup>

In an attempt to widen the discussion surrounding Spanish women's militancy beyond these well-known icons, the Catalan street artist Roc BlackBlock painted his own mural of an anonymous militiawoman on a former military barracks currently occupied by an anti-fascist collective. Roc BlackBlock began creating street art in 1999 on behalf of anarchist collectives in Barcelona, where he used graffiti to 'give colour and dignify the space...and at the same

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<sup>689</sup> Cynthia Enloe, 'Combat and "Combat": A Feminist Reflection', *Critical Studies on Security*, 1.2 (2013), 260-3. Enloe discusses how definitions of combat are historically situated and defined through a lens of masculine experiences and patriarchal expectations of conflict as a site for men to prove their masculinity, and how this framework excludes the experiences of women in war.

<sup>690</sup> Interview with Sarah Painter, June 2020.

<sup>691</sup> Hristova, p. 94.

time represent and transmit the principles on which the “social centre” was grounded.<sup>692</sup> Since then, he has collaborated with social collectives and community associations across Spain to create murals that reflect local character and history. In 2020, he founded Murs de Bitàcola, an organisation funded by the European Observatory on Memories that aims to use street art to recover, reclaim and celebrate local histories.<sup>693</sup> This project ‘paints the collective memory’ of local communities, and through this develops community relations and resituates local histories into public spaces, in a reversal and critique of the role street art has played in the gentrification of historically working class communities in Spain.<sup>694</sup> While all four murals in this chapter seek to visualise the past, only Roc BlackBlock directly collaborates with the community itself and involves them in the process of researching and designing street art. According to Roc BlackBlock, collaboration is critical to sustain the disruptive narratives presented in these murals. His collaborative approach also results in the mobilisation of fresh sources, as the street art created through Murs de Bitàcola draws on historical photography found across institutional archives, community organisations, and private collections. Through processes of photographic remediation, Roc BlackBlock thus seeks to reinvigorate marginalised histories of radical activism and transmits messages of anti-fascism, collective unity and resistance, and community action.

Like all the murals discussed in this chapter, gender is a key theme within BlackBlock’s work. His recent work in particular has focused on foregrounding women’s marginalised experiences of activism, with murals addressing the role of women in political activism, the French Resistance, and most notably, the active participation of women in the Spanish Civil War. His work draws similarities to Painter and Hayes as he too intervenes in the public erasure of women by physically painting them on the walls of the city, re-visualising and resituating them within public narratives of war and public spaces. He frames these murals as part of the larger process of constructing popular remembrance and intervening in exclusionary narratives through street art. As part of this approach, his work often includes QR codes that allow the viewer to scan them on their mobile phones, thereby providing

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<sup>692</sup> Placido Muñoz Moran, ‘The Graffiti Texture in Barcelona: An Ethnography of Public Space and Its Surfaces’, (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2015), p. 188.

<sup>693</sup> Unknown, ‘Sobre El Proyecto’, *Murs de Bitacola*, <<https://mursdebitacola.com/sobre-el-proyecto>> (accessed 20 October 2021).

<sup>694</sup> Unknown, ‘Sobre El Proyecto’. For more on street art and gentrification in Spain see: Tolonen, ‘Whatever I Can Do’, pp. 61-5.

historical context on the women represented in the mural and linking them to the Murs de Bitàcola for further explanation of the project. Through his remediation of archival photography, Roc BlackBlock constructs feminist narratives of war that complement the broader community work and institutional research on recovering women's excluded experiences of war and the dictatorship. Although the majority of his work has received positive engagement from the community, with some reproduced as part of exhibitions on Spanish street art, in contrast to the other murals examined in this chapter, BlackBlock's murals have been more contentious. In particular, murals with explicitly political themes,



**Figure 5.11**, Roc Black Block, 'Barcelona Antifeixista', 2020, Barcelona.

including those recreating photographs of Republican militiawomen, have been deliberately defaced with Francoist slogans, thus reflecting the contentious legacy of the civil war in Spain.<sup>695</sup>

In my analysis of the previous murals, I argued that the focus on a narrow canon of female revolutionary icons prevented a more thorough deconstruction of the patriarchal narratives of war, given that the attention towards singular women overshadowed the collective activism of unnamed and unrecorded militant women in Ireland and Spain.<sup>696</sup> In contrast to these, however, Roc BlackBlock's 2020 mural, seen in Figure 5.11, recreated a photograph of an unknown woman, which was not iconic or well-known in the Spanish

<sup>695</sup> Muñoz Moran, pp. 189-90.

<sup>696</sup> Barber, p. 5; Rodríguez López and Cazorla Sánchez, p. 695.

public's imaginary of the Civil War. In doing so, his work deliberately challenged the focus on singular icons of war. Figure 5.11 recreated Antoni Campaña's 1936 photograph of an anonymous anarchist militiawoman that had been shot as part of a CNT propaganda campaign. While this mural went beyond the photographic canon of the Spanish Civil War, it still reinforced the patriarchal frameworks that defined women's militancy, as like Guzmán's photograph of Marina Ginesta, the anonymous woman stared out defiantly at the viewer with her rifle strapped to her back; a display of masculine-coded combat that was widely photographed in the early days of the war. It is critical, then, to approach this mural with nuance, understanding it on one hand as a continuation of the dominant representation of militant women as symbolic combatants, and on the other as a disruption to the micro-politics of visibility in regards to the Spanish Civil War.<sup>697</sup> It allowed Roc BlackBlock to provoke discussions on the limited representations of Spanish militant women and call for an expansion beyond iconic figures. At the same time, however, the impact of this mural relied on an iconographic depiction of women's militancy. Like Guzmán's photograph of Ginestà discussed in the previous chapter, this usage reflects a visual power dynamic wherein women were only made visible as vessels for a wider political message.

Roc BlackBlock painted Figure 5.11 on the Kasa de la Muntanya building, an anarchist squat based in a former military barracks in collaboration with the collective occupying the building. It was designed to memorialise Barcelona's antifascist history and commemorate the militiamen and women who contributed to it.<sup>698</sup> Roc BlackBlock completed the mural the week before the opening of the *Dones del 36* memorial, which, as I discussed in Chapter 4, was a garden installation designed and funded by the Barcelona City Council that commemorated women who fought in the Spanish Civil War through an abstract living mural based on Guzmán's photograph of Ginestà. The timing of these two commemorative works, as well as Painter and Hayes' mural painted earlier that month, drew comparisons about how women's experiences of conflict had been visualised in public commemorations, and in particular, the focus on singular icons of war such as Ginestà. Indeed, the local newspaper *L'Independent de*

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<sup>697</sup> Rigney, 'Remaking Memory', p. 18. As Rigeny argues, remaking collective memory relies on disruptions to the micro-politics of viewing, reading and reacting in a gradual, multi-layered process across multiple different art forms.

<sup>698</sup> Interview with Roc Black Block in: Editorial Staff, 'Un Mural a la Kasa de la Muntanya ret Homenatge als Milicians', *Beteré*, 21 February 2020, <<https://beteve.cat/cultura/mural-roc-blackblock-kasa-muntanya-homenatge-barcelona-anifeixista>> (accessed: 16 November 2021).

Gràcia described Roc BlackBlock's piece as 'replicating *Dones del 36* with a different militiawoman', and framed it as a more authentic representation of women's experiences of war.<sup>699</sup> Coincidentally, Ginestà had been one of the options proposed for the Kasa de la Muntanya mural, but Roc BlackBlock decided to reproduce Campaña's photograph of the anarchist militiawoman because to him, she represented a more authentic vision of the Spanish militant women as a collective of workers engaging in popular resistance, rather than the propagandistic depiction of the militiawoman as a young, pretty woman in uniform—a depiction deliberately invoked in Guzmán's photograph of Marina Ginestà. Yet, while the subject of Campaña's



**Figure 5.12**, Antoni Campaña, 'Militiawoman at the Bakunin Barracks', Barcelona, August 1936. Courtesy of Arixu Campaña.

photograph differed from Guzmán's image, both photographs reflected the dominant mythology of the combative militiawomen, a mythos that overshadows the diversity and scope of Spanish women's participation during the war.

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<sup>699</sup> Unknown, 'La Kasa de la Muntanya'.

Shot by Antoni Campaña for the CNT-FAI Office of Information and Propaganda in August 1936, Figure 5.12 was one of many photographs that used the figure of the combatant woman to call on the Spanish people to defend the Second Republic against the Nationalists. Against the background of the Bruc barracks, which had been the site from which rebel forces launched their attempted coup in Barcelona on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1936, the photograph captured a young woman gazing directly at the camera, with the beginnings of a smile on her otherwise serious face. Campaña positioned the camera from below to achieve the shot, infusing the woman pictured within the image with a sense of authority and power that was also reflected by her militaristic uniform and the rifle she carries on her back. Like Guzmán's photograph of Marina Ginestà, this combination of youthful femininity and overt militancy framed the anonymous women as an iconographic allegory of the hundreds of women who joined the militias and fought on the frontlines during the Spanish Civil War. While this image was produced for propaganda purposes, alongside similar shots of her male comrades at the barracks, it was not published or circulated publicly until the early twenty-first century. In this, the photograph parallels the photograph of Ginestà or the photograph of Markievicz that inspired Blake's mural, however, unlike these two images, the woman pictured in Figure 5.12 remains unknown. After the defeat of the Republican forces in 1939, Antoni Campaña hid the negative of this photograph along with his other Republican photography, while the copies of this photograph made by the CNT-FAI were moved to the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, alongside other anarchist documents. It was first displayed publicly in Spain in 2019, as part of the Barcelona Photographic Archive's 2019 exhibition 'Gràfica anarquista. Fotografia i revolució social. 1936-1939' (Anarchist Graphics: Photography and Social Revolution, 1936-1939), which is where Roc BlackBlock encountered the image.

In his mural, Roc BlackBlock maintained the symbolic resonance of this photograph as he used it to commemorate women's roles in the conflict and in anti-fascist resistance movements more broadly. Paralleling Emma Blake's mural of Constance Markievicz, Roc BlackBlock attempted to maintain the historicity of the photograph by painting the mural in sepia tones, evoking the aesthetics of vintage photography while removing the photographic markers present in the image. Against the sandstone wall that formed the backdrop of the mural, Roc BlackBlock's skilful use of light and shade distinguished the anarchist militiawoman from the wall, ensuring that the mural was legible and clear from a distance. The tones of the image

almost blended into the background, with the skilful use of shading and shadows distinguishing the militiawoman against the wall. While Painter and Hayes framed Ginesta as a generic depiction of a militiawoman without political affiliation, BlackBlock clearly framed the anonymous militiawoman within the anarchist movement, specifically contemporary Catalan anarchism through his adoption of the phrase 'BCN Antifa' at the top of the mural. In this sense, the anonymous militiawoman, like Ginestà, served as a performative guide that connected historic activism with current, global antifascist movement.

Roc BlackBlock reproduced Campaña's image to reflect a broader engagement with women's participation that challenged the stereotypes and myths associated with Spanish militiawomen. However, his mural also reinforced hegemonic ways of seeing militant women. Within contemporary public commemoration of Spanish women in the Civil War, there are limited cultural scripts available to account for women's experiences of war, with the result that discussion of their active militancy and participation is refracted through the symbolic figures of icons such as Lina Odena and Ginestà.<sup>700</sup> Murals, as I discussed in the introduction, are a crucial means to develop and circulate new cultural scripts and modes of participation that can account for marginalised memories. While Roc BlackBlock's mural of the anonymous militiawomen breaks away from the dominance of icons, thus allowing for previously overlooked experiences to come to the forefront of public narratives of war, it does not substantively challenge or redefine the patriarchal frameworks surrounding women's militancy.

Roc BlackBlock encountered this photograph in an exhibition dedicated to diversifying public narratives of the Civil War. Based on documents provided by the anarchist Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, the exhibition provided a new perspective on women's participation in both conflict and the social revolution. It included photographs of women in factories, as militants and activists, as journalists, photographers, and political educators. In this way, Roc BlackBlock's mural could have drawn on photographs that demonstrated the diverse scope of women's militancy and role in antifascism. Instead, he maintained continuity with the allegorical image of the militiawomen as a signifier for women's participation. His mural can thus be compared with Gearóid O'Dea's mural on Irish militant women that similarly tried to visualise different aspects of women's revolutionary participation, while actually conforming to broader, patriarchal frameworks. Even as street artists such as Roc BlackBlock reframe these photographs to enhance women's presence in public narratives of

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<sup>700</sup> In the context of the Spanish Civil War, Linhard argues that the dominance of such narratives results from the lack of available tropes to account of women's participation in war. Linhard, 'The Death Story', p. 200.

war, the embodied histories of these images and the circumstances under which they were made continue to influence how women's militancy is seen in contemporary society.

This complex entanglement of visibility and erasure is also demonstrated through the anonymity of the militiawoman. Alison Moore has argued that public memory is governed by 'not only what is said... but indeed also by what is shown and seen, and specifically by what is seen and not heard'.<sup>701</sup> Within the visual culture of the Spanish front, women were represented as anonymous spectacles, a framing that allowed them to become aestheticized symbols of war, rather than individuals with their own interiority and history. While these aestheticized photographs of Spanish militiawomen continue to circulate, their public visibility contrasts with the continued lack of public recognition given to women's experiences of war. The recovery of Ginesta's identity allowed her to challenge the symbolic narrative assigned to her, as well as historicise her iconic photograph not as a spontaneous snapshot but a carefully staged production of a revolutionary icon, though as I established in the previous chapter, the impact of this intervention was limited in the face of the dominance of the mythos surrounding her. The anonymity of the militiawoman in Campana's photograph, however, has prevented a similar moment of reckoning.

Both murals discussed in this section signify the beginnings of a memory assemblage around Spanish women's militancy, wherein images, representations and memories of gendered experiences of war converge and gain salience through continual repetition and resonance across different media.<sup>702</sup> This then allows for marginalised experiences of militant women to gain a foothold in public narratives of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>703</sup> Considering these two murals in tandem, and the broader trend of Spanish street art that they represent, it is clear that their remediation of historical photographs provided a new means of engaging with and articulating women's experiences of war. Like Emma Blake's reinterpretation of Constance Markievicz within the contemporary Irish feminist movement, both murals reactivated photographs within a practice of visual memory work that connects them to

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<sup>701</sup> Moore, p. 662. The *femmes tondues* are French women who were targeted as collaborators after the defeat of German forces at the end of Second World War who were publicly and ritually humiliated through gendered punishment, including head-shaving.

<sup>702</sup> Chidgey, p. 1; Rigney, 'Remaking Memory', p. 18.

<sup>703</sup> Chidgey, pp. 3-4.

contemporary activism, enabling them to become emblematic of their historical context, while also allowing them to transcend the past and represent contemporary calls for solidarity and defiance against fascism and authoritarianism.<sup>704</sup> However, while the remediation of militant women's war photography brought militiawomen's experiences into the public sphere, their murals also demonstrated how the process of making women visible intersects with established patriarchal frameworks of war. In both murals, active engagement with combat constituted these women as militants, thus maintaining continuity with the mythic ideal of the *militiana* as the benchmark for women's participation. The iconic photographs that provided the basis of these murals were produced in a visual context that reflected only a minority of women's engagement with war. While these murals attempted to break the silence surrounding women's participation in war, they unintentionally reproduced a patriarchal gaze that embodied insidious and widespread processes of erasure, reflecting the complexity and difficulty of making women's experiences of war visible in public narratives of war.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Remembrance is a practice achieved through active engagement with the past.<sup>705</sup> The creation of historical street art in Ireland and Spain reflects the growing public demand to recover and recognise the marginalised experiences of militant women. These visual representations of the past are critical tools in the construction of feminist narratives of war, as the reproduction, recirculation, and remediation of these photographs actively subverts masculine-dominated narratives. As this chapter has shown, their recreation within public street art in particular has challenged their exclusion from institutional narratives. Gearóid O'Dea's mural intended to commemorate women who had been overshadowed by their connections to male rebels, while Emma Blake's collaborative mural with the Minaw Collective remobilised archival photography to visualise Markievicz's feminism, an aspect of her identity eclipsed by her nationalism. Sarah Painter, Cosby Hayes, and Roc BlackBlock's murals sought to widen the photographic canon of the Spanish Civil War and disrupt the domination of masculine narratives of the conflict. All four murals catalysed disruptions and expansions to public narratives of war; yet, as I have problematised in this chapter, their remediation of archival photographs can reinforce, rather than dismantle, patriarchal narratives of war.<sup>706</sup> Photographs have been used to control, redefine, and delegitimise

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<sup>704</sup> Merrill, pp. 111-2.

<sup>705</sup> Erll and Rigney, p. 2.

<sup>706</sup> Rigney, 'Remaking Memory', p. 12.

women's militancy, and the legacy of these photographic frames, or ways of seeing women's militancy, remains active within the narratives constructed within street art.<sup>707</sup> Whilst it is critical not to undercut the importance of these murals in legitimising and memorialising women's participation in war in Ireland and Spain, this renewed public visibility does not necessarily constitute a new way of seeing women's militancy.

In a sense, the inherent ephemerality of these murals reflects the complexity of making women visible within contemporary narratives of war in Ireland and Spain. In their analysis of Ireland's commemorative landscape, Maeve Casserly and Ciaran O'Neil argued that 'walking the streets of Dublin, it is often hard to find a place for women in this historical narrative', with women framed as allegorical representations that garland the statues of the so-called great men of Irish history, an issue which also resonates in Spain.<sup>708</sup> While public murals intervene in this erasure, they will always be overwritten and at risk of being forgotten. Street art is embedded within a continual process of re-writing—new works will replace murals on open walls, as happened with Painter and Hayes' mural of Marina Ginestà and Emma Blake's painting of Markievicz, while installations like O'Dea's paste-up of Markievicz, Gifford Plunkett, and Pearse will be worn down by time and weather. Other murals, including many of Roc BlackBlock's works, are defaced by opposing political activists or deliberately removed by the state; an intervention that reflects the difficulty in constructing narratives that challenge state-led narratives. As these murals fade away, so too do the topics they depicted, a counterpoint to the continual forgetting of women's histories of war and revolution outside of commemorative moments.<sup>709</sup> Only a minority of murals are photographed, preserved and circulated online, just as only a fraction of women's experiences are integrated into patriarchal narratives of war. These digital encounters provoke different viewing experiences and frameworks for seeing women's militancy. For example, in online photographs of Blake's mural of Markievicz, the mural was frequently cropped to only show Markievicz, with only a minority of images capturing the full piece. While the full image is available online, on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, it is easier to encounter the cropped image. However, the cropped versions of this mural change the messaging of the piece from feminist

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<sup>707</sup> Pichel, p. 211.

<sup>708</sup> Casserly and O'Neill, p. 24.

<sup>709</sup> McAttackney, '1916 and After', pp. 72-3. McAttackney reflects on the difficulty of reconciling ordinary women's experiences of militancy into the exceptional narratives constructed during the commemorations of the Easter Rising, as they centred on iconic women such as Markievicz and thus failed to sustainably integrate the broader experiences of militant women into public narratives of the past.

collaboration to the celebration of a singular woman.<sup>710</sup> As these remediated images circulate online, they are often subjected to a historical and biographical collapse that divorces the photograph from its contexts of production and circulation; frequently, these digital afterlives do not credit the artists, the original photographer or the subject of the piece.<sup>711</sup> Through this collapse, the women visualised in these murals become iconised and commodified, their images distilled down to symbols of rebellion and gender defiance, while the context of their militancy and their individual histories is omitted. While street art offers a way to subvert women's erasure, we must also be cognizant that it is a practice embedded within patriarchal conditions of visibility.<sup>712</sup>

The complex interplay of erasure and visibility emerges in the practices of street art in two ways: firstly, through the exclusionary archival practices surrounding the remediated images, and secondly, the patriarchal conditions of visibility embedded in the photographs themselves. Throughout the latter half of this thesis, I have focused on historicising the circulation of photographs and understanding how photographic afterlives influences their position within contemporary narratives of war. In mapping the murals within the wider afterlives of these photographs, it is critical to consider how archival practices affects the alternative narratives of war constructed by these murals. The archive determines the meanings imposed onto photographs and the value assigned to them, which then impacts on their circulation within contemporary narratives of war.<sup>713</sup> While these murals seek to disrupt and dismantle exclusionary narratives of war, they draw on a source base built on patriarchal frameworks of war. Their narratives, therefore, make some women visible, while the majority remain ensconced within overarching processes of erasure. However, as Elizabeth Edwards discusses, while the archive directs photographic meaning in the archive, the reproduction and re-imagining of these photographs can generate new historical visions.<sup>714</sup> The muralists' engagement with these photographs and their remediation within public space exposes and deconstructs the limitations of the archive, and particularly in the case of Roc BlackBlock's

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<sup>710</sup> Digital circulation reshapes the practices of circulating and consuming street art, with McDowell and de Souza discussing how platforms such as Instagram pose challenges in the framing of murals, as well as the larger implications of posting content that is viewed for immediate visual impact, rather than sustained analysis or consideration. McDowell and de Souza, pp. 8-9.

<sup>711</sup> Merrill, p. 115.

<sup>712</sup> Jessica Pabón, 'Ways of Being Seen: Gender and the Writing on the Wall', in *Routledge Handbook of Graffiti and Street Art*, ed. by Jeffrey Ian Ross (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 78-91, (p. 88).

<sup>713</sup> Rose, 'Practising Photography', p. 558.

<sup>714</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photographic Returns: Racial Justice and the Time of Photography* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2020), p. 10.

organization Murs al Bitàcola, offers a means for the community to re-engage with these historical photographs and impart their own histories onto them.

By examining these murals as part of the photographic afterlives of the original images, I also explored how these murals reproduced the patriarchal conditions of visibility surrounding the photograph's production, circulation and consumption. As Patricia Hayes has discussed, when approaching the question of how women are made visible, visibility should not be conflated with empowerment.<sup>715</sup> In order to most effectively engage with the viewer, street art reproduces iconic and familiar imagery that aligns to existing public understandings of women's militancy: Painter, Hayes, and BlackBlock's murals all reproduced an explicitly militarised visualisation of Spanish women's militancy, while O'Dea and Blake focused on already established revolutionary icons. In doing so, photographs depicting everyday experiences of militancy are overshadowed, reinforcing a patriarchal framework of war that does not recognise the wide spectrum of women's participation during war. Furthermore, when reproducing photographs, the gendered power dynamics involved in the image's creation and circulation are often replicated, thus furthering patriarchal narratives of war under the guise of feminist visibility. The murals of Spanish militiawomen recreated propagandistic photographs that framed the women within them as anonymous symbols—directly, in the case of Campaña's photograph and indirectly in terms of Guzmán's misattribution of Ginestà. In directly adapting these images and continuing to frame these women as revolutionary symbols, the muralists amplified a gendered power dynamic that disempowered women, allowing them to be seen only within allegorical frameworks. In contrast, the Irish murals recreated studio portraits commissioned by the women themselves, which allowed them to retain power over how they were seen and by whom. Yet, O'Dea and Blake's remediation of these images denied women's photographic agency, as they removed the deliberately constructed traces of violence from Markievicz's portraiture, thus continuing a process of visually disarming and redefining militant women.

With this in mind, however, it is also important to discuss the role these murals play within the context of a broader constellation of visual practices that have interrupted and remade exclusionary narratives. Throughout these past two chapters, I have reflected on the difficulties of making Irish and Spanish militant women's experiences of war visible within public narratives of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War. I have reflected on the complexities of visibility, of remembrance, and the interactions between institutional

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<sup>715</sup> Hayes, p. 521.

spaces of memory and counter-cultural sites that disrupt hegemonic narratives. Whilst I have approached these efforts of recovery critically, they are also essential in creating the conditions to overcome patriarchal narratives of war. As Ann Rigney has argued, changes in cultural memory are driven by 'small acts of repair', that is to say by multiple disruptions of the micro-politics of memory at both individual and collective levels.<sup>716</sup> Street art, as a performative and collaborative mode of remembrance, shapes our understanding of the Irish Revolution and the Spanish Civil War, and women's roles within these conflicts. It replicates patriarchal frameworks of militancy and further consolidates a process of erasure, yet, its process of re-imagination and recreation interrupts a hyper-masculine narrative of war to offer an alternative vision of the past. It constructs narratives that allow for a convergence of women's memories of war to emerge, and it provokes further interest and engagement in these marginalised histories. Blake's piece, for example, has led to the Minaw Collective designing further murals commemorating lesser-known revolutionary women, such as Claire Provaust's mural of writer and Irish republican activist Dorothy Mcardle erected in her birthplace of Dundalk. In Spain, community projects such as the Pinta Pasado initiative have used muralism to engage young people in historical memory, ensuring that these disruptive memories unrepresented in institutional narratives are maintained and passed on.<sup>717</sup> Just like women's practices of defiant visibility discussed in the earlier chapters of this thesis, these creative interventions build the foundations of a more significant shift in the public narratives of war.

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<sup>716</sup> Rigney, 'Remaking Memory', p. 18. Rigney cites the concept of 'small acts of repair' from Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, 'Small Acts of Repair: The Unclaimed Legacy of the Romanian Holocaust', *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies*, 4.1-2, (2015), 13-42.

<sup>717</sup> John Patrick Thompson, 'Pinta Pasado, Crea Futuro: A New Approach for Remembering the Second Republic, the Civil War and the Franco Dictatorship', *Journal of Iberia and Latin American Studies*, 25.3 (2019), 343-59.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

In Doireann Ní Ghriofra's novel *A Ghost in the Throat*, she details her journey recovering Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill from the historical shadow. In one passage, she highlights the potential of women's artefacts as a way to retrace women's lives from the margins of history.

To my elation, I find it is a fragment of delph... whether this fragment could be traced to Máire or Nelly's hand doesn't bother me. All that matters is that I am lifting an artefact symbolic of the female lives and thought and labour that belonged to this place.<sup>718</sup>

Like this shard of delph, women's photographs are another artefact of women's lives and labour that are too often overshadowed and neglected. Yet, throughout this thesis, I have shown that these overlooked objects contain an untold potential to disrupt and re-write conventional narratives of war. Dismantling patriarchal narratives of war relies on a constellation of practices and engagement across state narratives, institutional spaces, and the public sphere. It requires multi-layered disruptions at individual and collective levels, bringing academia and the community into collaborative dialogue.<sup>719</sup> It requires us to go beyond the archive and traditional methodologies, and to engage with new sources and read others against the grain; to look at fragments of delph, scrapbooks, and photo albums as sites of rich, historical possibility. During war, women used photography to envisage radical possibilities and articulate their experiences of conflict, and after war, they transformed these photographs into a means of defiant remembrance. By harnessing this legacy, we can unlock their disruptive potential to use these photographs to dismantle patriarchal processes of erasure and build transformative, alternative narratives of war.

This thesis has sought to answer a number of questions that shape new understandings of gender, war, and photography during and after conflict in Ireland and Spain. Interrogating the relationship between sight and power guided the development of this thesis, as I questioned how women are looked at during war, how these ways of seeing women shift during and after conflict, and how our understanding of women's presence in war is

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<sup>718</sup> Doireann Ní Ghriofra, *A Ghost in the Throat* (Dublin: Tramp Press, 2020), pp. 205-6.

<sup>719</sup> Rigney, 'Remaking Memory', p. 18.

destabilised when we consider how women themselves returned this gaze. Through comparative case studies spanning from the outbreak of conflict in the early twentieth century to commemorations of these events in the present day, I have shown that, for militant women, photography was simultaneously a weapon of war used to delegitimise their participation, a tool of defiant remembrance to contest their erasure, and a potential means of rewriting war. Reframing photographs as more than just illustrations has shown the potential in re-evaluating our methodological approach to photography as historians. By embracing the ambiguity of photographs, both iconic images that have lasted the test of time and ordinary images previously hidden from the public gaze, I have shone a new light on the myriad of complex, contradictory meanings and narratives contained under the surface of these photographic objects. These photographs shape our understanding of the past, yet they also hold the potential to intercede and puncture the enduring historical narratives around gender and war.

In developing this social history of Irish and Spanish militant women's photographic practices, exploring not only how they were represented and redefined within war photography, but also how they articulated their own experiences of war through taking and remaking photographs, I have provided a wider historical vision of how Irish and Spanish women engaged in war. In Chapter 2, I demonstrated that, contrary to popular belief, the erasure of militant women was not a post-conflict phenomenon, but rather was a process in action throughout the war itself. By historicising the circulation and consumption of war photography of militant women during the Irish revolutionary period and Spanish Civil War, I provided insights into how photography was a tool of warfare that actively redefined and erased women as part of efforts to reconstruct the patriarchal order and maintain control of the destabilization of gender roles caused by war. Yet, I also showed how women used photography to challenge these processes of erasure, which I developed further in Chapter 3. Focusing on the under-studied area of women's vernacular photography, I demonstrated how women engaged with photography as a means of defiant remembrance, subverting and remaking patriarchal narratives of war. Using women's vernacular photographic practices in the political press and testimonial writing, I demonstrated how they constructed pockets of visibility and photographic counter-narratives that challenged dominant narratives of war. For militant women in post-conflict Ireland and Spain, photography was a tool of defiance and recognition, which they used to construct an alternative gaze on war.

These case studies challenged the celebratory ideal of photography as an uncritical means of making women visible, by highlighting how photographs taken during war replicated patriarchal conditions of visibility that reinforced normative gendered ideologies and

delegitimised women's active participation. In post-conflict Ireland and Spain, militant women's photographic visibility was weaponised against them by the state to frame them as threats to the new social order of the Irish Free State and Francoist dictatorship. Even within the counter-narratives of war constructed by Irish and Spanish resistance organisations, women's visibility as active participants of war relied on being framed as exceptional icons, with those who did not fit this framework delegitimised and erased. To be seen, then, in public narratives of war is a balancing act of negotiating patriarchal conditions of visibility. By tracing the afterlives of war photographs in contemporary Ireland and Spain in the second half of this thesis, I demonstrated that this complex negotiation of visibility still shapes our understanding of women's militancy.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I explored the relationship between photography and remembrance within the contemporary cultural memory of war in Ireland and Spain. In particular, I problematised the role of photography as a mechanism for recovering women into public narratives of war by highlighting how the drive to make women visible often replicates patriarchal conditions of visibility. Iconic photographs and narratives of rediscovery enable women to be re-inserted into public narratives of war, but as I argued in Chapter 4, this visibility in fact reinforces patriarchal frameworks of war as it naturalises women's erasure and continues to frame them within a framework of exceptionalism, thereby perpetuating the collective erasure of the majority of women's participation. This issue of exceptionalism is also discussed in Chapter 5, where I examined how contemporary Irish and Spanish street art remediated and subverted archival photographs in order to construct alternative, feminist narratives of war. Similar to my findings in Chapter 4, however, this means of making women visible rendered them as symbols, and often redefined women's militancy within patriarchal paradigms of glorified combat, rather than reckoning with the fluidity and diversity of women's wartime participation. Photographs play a key role in re-activating inert and marginalised experiences of war, but photographic visibility alone cannot address the deliberate and sustained processes of patriarchal erasure surrounding militant women.

Echoing throughout this thesis, however, is an overarching question: if photographs have been used to construct patriarchal mythologies of war, and the value of these images in contemporary cultural memory reinforces these exclusionary narratives, how then can we harness the disruptive potential of these photographs to build an alternative narrative of war? As I discussed in the introduction, this thesis is not only a study of how militant women were erased from cultural narratives of war, it is also the history of their resistance to this erasure. It is critical therefore to take inspiration from these acts of defiance as we look to disrupt the patriarchal narratives of war in Ireland and Spain. Drawing the core findings of this thesis

together, three central themes emerge that I argue provide the foundation to disrupt patriarchal narratives of war: rethinking the intersections between visibility and erasure, problematising narratives of amnesia and rediscovery, and foregrounding women's photographic practices to build an alternative gaze on war.

Throughout this thesis, I have made it clear that there is a tension between the hypervisibility of a minority of women, who are canonised as icons and symbols of war, and the deliberate erasure of the wider collectives of militant women. In this study, I have put Patricia Hayes' demand to critically interrogate how and why women are made visible into action, as I have historicised the production, circulation, and consumption of photographs of militant women and traced how the photographic meaning of these images is continually redefined according to patriarchal conditions of visibility.<sup>720</sup> During later stages of war, for example, public visibility and recognition relied on conforming to non-threatening, domestic ideologies of gender, while in the present day; militant women must be seen as actively breaking gendered roles and taking on a masculine-coded role in combat to have a place in the cultural memory of war. Indeed, in the aftermath of war, militant women had to negotiate between these different standards of visibility as they sought recognition and validation for their participation in warfare and resistance movements. The uncritical demand for visibility, then, does not necessarily challenge or disrupt patriarchal narratives of war; instead, it shines light on a minority of women redefined as symbols, while maintaining the erasure of their comrades. Therefore, it is crucial that we move away from the demand of making women visible, and instead turn towards interrogating who remains unseen within this entanglement of visibility and erasure.

Related to this, the narrative frameworks of historical amnesia and rediscovery that govern some militant women's re-integration into public narratives of war in Ireland and Spain reinforce the problematic aspects of this demand for uncritical visibility. Women's history has frequently invoked ideas of rediscovery to frame the recuperation of women's marginalised experiences; yet, while this framework enables the development of broader historical narratives, it simultaneously naturalises gendered processes of erasure. Problematising these narratives of rediscovery in Ireland and Spain demonstrates that recovering histories of women's agency or exceptional women does not overturn entrenched patriarchal master narratives—rather, this thesis has shown that we need to trace histories of erasure to exclusionary narratives of war.<sup>721</sup> This is particularly important when considering

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<sup>720</sup> Hayes, p. 556.

<sup>721</sup> Allman, p. 24

the role of photographs within narratives of historical amnesia and rediscovery, where images are mobilised to shape the cultural memory of war and determine who is allowed to be seen in these narratives. Photographs are mechanisms of both visibility and erasure, and engaging with their complex histories enables the deconstruction of reductive narratives of forgetting and rediscovery. The social biography of photographs reveals rich histories of circulation and consumption, while examining the practices surrounding them highlights their importance as emotional objects. Within narratives of rediscovery, these facets of their history is neglected in favour of the visual content of the image. By tracing the complex lives and afterlives of photographs during and after conflict, I argue that we can bring a new level of nuance to our understanding of gender and war, rejecting superficial linear narratives of forgetting and rediscovery to instead engage with the myriad of contradictory narratives and counter-narratives that characterise women's participation in conflict.

Speaking of the disruptive potential in historicising photographs and the practices surrounding them brings me to my final argument. In order to redress these concerns and actively dismantle patriarchal narratives of war, we must look towards how women themselves constructed alternative gazes on war and bring these back into focus. Throughout this study, I have shown how militant women engaged with photographs as a tool to articulate and legitimise their participation in war, to defy erasure, and to build their own counter-narratives of conflict. Women's photographic practices have continuously been excluded from both histories of war and histories of photography in Ireland and Spain, yet their engagement with photography forces us to rethink our understanding of both these fields. Their photographic practices, seen in studio portraiture, clandestine snapshots, and scrapbooks, highlight their complex relationship with war and militancy. Furthermore, their photographic engagement underscores the diversity and fluidity of women's militancy during war, providing a model of participation that goes beyond patriarchal definitions of active participation to accentuate activism that builds the invisible infrastructure that makes combat and resistance possible.<sup>722</sup> Beyond this, their use of photography within post-conflict memory activism reveals a critical new dimension to our understanding of gendered militancy in Ireland and Spain that challenges the concept of forgotten or invisible women. These complex photographic counter-narratives display an alternative gaze on war that forces us to reconsider how militant women were seen during and after conflict by foregrounding how militant women envisioned themselves and their comrades.

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<sup>722</sup> Collins Weitz, p. vii.

This thesis serves as a foundation to further rethink women's diverse engagement with and participation in war. My analysis of gendered visibility and photography during and after conflict opens several avenues for future research, which, by necessity, have fallen outside of the scope of this thesis. By placing the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War into a comparative context, my work has elaborated on the commonalities of gendered narratives of war in twentieth-century Europe, and this perspective could be developed further through broadening this comparative focus, for example by discussing women's participation in revolutionary warfare in Russia. This would be particularly relevant in terms of bringing in a more intersectional understanding of how gender, war, and photograph interact when operating within a colonial context, for example, or in understanding how militancy is visualised within the Global South. Such an approach would also bridge the disciplinary gaps between research on gender in more contemporary conflicts, such as Kurdish women in the Syrian Democratic Forces, which tend to be examined through the lens of international relations and security studies, and historical analyses of past conflicts.

Due to the design of this thesis and my longitudinal approach, I deliberately engaged with a wide scope of photographic genres and practices. While all the central themes of all four of my chapters—wartime representations of militant women, post-conflict photography, photography and cultural memory, and photographic remediation—could all be examined in greater depth in further work, my analysis of women's photographic practices in post-conflict Ireland and Spain in particular invites further research. By necessity, the case studies I choose in this chapter were representative rather than exclusive, and further analysis of the rich source material of women's political journals, testimony, and prison photography would greatly enhance our understanding of women's memory activism in the aftermath of war.

Additionally, I focused on archival photographic material as the basis of my case studies; however, a project taking an ethnographic approach and analysing a more selective collection of women's personal archives would add considerable depth to scholarly understandings of gender and war. In particular, it would develop further on my discussion in Chapter 5 on how the archive and the dynamics of collecting and cataloguing images shapes the public visibility of women's militancy. Finally, another facet of my research that could be developed in other projects is examining how the visualisation of women's militancy shifts when examining women's participation on the far right, such as the Irish Blueshirts and the Spanish *Sección*

*Femenina*, as academic research of these women would complement the broader historical knowledge of gender and war.<sup>723</sup>

To conclude, this thesis has contributed innovative, interdisciplinary insights to the study of the Irish revolutionary period and the Spanish Civil War. By bringing these two case studies into dialogue, I have shed new light on the complex interactions between gender, war, and photography, and contributed to scholarly understandings of the complexity of women's participation in and engagement with war, and the difficulty in recognising these experiences within a patriarchal framework that invalidates and erases the majority of militant women. I have shown the need to engage with photographs as culturally mediated, historical objects and to integrate them into our methodological approach, rather than using them as illustrations or objective evidence of the past. I have deconstructed and added nuance to our understanding of what it means to be visible, highlighting how this is inherently entangled with processes of erasure. Finally, I have provided a model for how we can harness the disruptive potential of militant women's defiant photographic practices to dismantle patriarchal narratives of war. This is particularly relevant as we draw closer to the politically contentious commemorations of the centenary of the Irish Civil War and the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish Civil War, which has seen familiar narratives of invisible women, historical amnesia, and photographic rediscoveries begin to re-emerge across Ireland and Spain. As these new waves of commemoration approach, I hope that the findings of this thesis, and the broader feminist research on war in Ireland and Spain that has emerged since I began this project in 2017, enable us to dismantle these patriarchal mythologies and re-write the public narratives of war, centring women and their defiant practices of remembrance.

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<sup>723</sup> Scholars such as Begoña Barrera López, Andrea Petó, and Dale Montgomery are leading work in these areas. See: Begoña Barrera López, *La Sección Femenina, 1934-1977: Historia de una Tutela Emocional* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2020); Andrea Petó, 'Forgotten Perpetrators: Photographs of Female Perpetrators after WWII' in *Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations on War, Genocide and Policial Violence*, ed. by Ayşe Güл Altınyay and Andrea Petó (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 203-17; Dale Montgomery, "No Suggestion of Suffragettism": The Blue Blouses in Ireland, 1933-1936', *Women's History Review*, 23.5 (2014), 776-92.



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