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Commemorating dead 'men': gendering the past and present in post-conflict Northern Ireland

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War is instrumental in shaping and negotiating gender identities. But what role does peace play in dispelling or affirming the gender order in post-conflict contexts? Building on a burgeoning international literature on representative landscapes and based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Northern Ireland between 2003 and 2006, this article explores the peacetime commemoration of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles' in order to explore the nuances of gender. Tellingly, the memorial landscapes cultivated since the inception of the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 privilege male interpretations of the past (and, therefore, present). Gender parity, despite being enshrined within the 1998 Belfast Agreement which sought to draw a line under almost three decades of ethno-nationalist violence, remains an elusive utopia, as memorials continue to propagate specific roles for men and women in the 'national project'. As the masculine ideologies of Irish Nationalism/Republicanism and British Unionism/Loyalism inscribe their respective disputant pasts into the streetscape, the narratives of women have been blurred and disrupted, begging the question: what role can they play in the future?

Keywords: Northern Ireland; gender; conflict; commemoration; nationalism

Introduction

The Northern Ireland conflict over the course of three decades of ethno-nationalist violence claimed the lives of some 3700 people (McKittrick et al. 2004), the majority of whom were men.[1] In a conflict orchestrated largely by men against men, the experiences of women and their varied interpretations have often been elided from localised narratives of the past. Yet there can be little doubt of the overwhelming impact of the conflict on women (Morgan 1996) and of their crucially important (if diverse) roles. Of late, feminist writers have begun to interrogate these roles, concentrating on both the implicit and explicit involvement of Northern Irish women in the colloquially termed *Troubles*. Such research has documented the often silenced experiences of wives and mothers following the imprisonment and/or deaths of their husbands and sons (Arextaga 1997; Dowler 1997; Porter 1998); the violence orchestrated against women and the rupturing of private spaces and traditional boundaries (Edgerton 1986; McWilliams 1997; Pickering 2000); the participation of women in public protests and peace-building (Lentin 1997; Hammond Callaghan 2002, Ashe 2006b); and, more recently, the involvement of women in paramilitary activity (Alison 2004). While these often forgotten narratives have been given the discussion that they deserve in the peacetime years (within academic research), their presentation within the cultural landscape has been both decidedly limited and overtly gendered. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the burgeoning commemorative landscape forged since

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the advent of peace in 1994 which continues to project a hyper-masculine interpretation of the past (and present).

The overarching aim of this article, therefore, is to discuss the gendered nuances of commemoration in post-conflict Northern Ireland through an examination of commemorative material culture such as monuments, plaques and street murals. Based on research undertaken in Northern Ireland between September 2004 and January 2007, the article is essentially qualitative in focus and includes interview material collated from semi-structured interviews (25 in total, all of which were taped) with representatives from combatant organisations, political parties, victims' groups and the civilian population. Scientific sampling methods were not used to locate the people interviewed for this research. Instead, I began by contacting the many victims' groups which formed throughout the conflict, each representing a particular experience including victims of Republican or Loyalist violence, or state violence. I also contacted all the major political parties in Northern Ireland as well as former combatant associations and ex-prisoners. Many groups were reluctant to participate while the majority of those who did asked to remain anonymous given the recentness of the conflict and the sensitivity surrounding it. Also included in the article is material collated from informal conversations with people I met throughout my fieldwork. Participant observation – namely of commemorative practices and rituals such as unveilings, marches and annual commemorations – was also deemed necessary to provide a basic understanding of the gendered nature of communities/groups. Observing such practices gave a unique insight into the nuances of gendered memorialisation. Media analysis and archival research further enhanced this study. Given that the research is directly concerned with physical memorials to the conflict such as monuments, street murals, plaques and gardens of remembrance, the incorporation of visual methodologies was crucial. Approaching the landscape as a 'text' to be read and interpreted, I mapped, photographed and decoded approximately 300 memorials and commemorative street murals to the recent Troubles in the cities, towns and villages of the region.

This article therefore questions whether or not 'peace' has occasioned the renegotiation of wartime gender identities. Building on work by Edwards (2000), Heffernan and Medlicott (2004), and Muzaini and Yeoh (2005) which illuminates the potential of the built environment to reinforce or reconstruct gender roles, it is premised here that cultural landscapes as emblematic sites of representation (Johnson 1994; Whelan 2003, 2005) can communicate (and reproduce) specific notions of masculinity and femininity in regard to the nation and are, therefore, crucially important within ethno-nationalist struggles, even in peacetime. In Northern Ireland, cultural landscapes reveal both a past and present shaped and defined overwhelmingly by men despite tentative efforts to implement gender parity, an ideal distinctly absent throughout much of the conflict. Paradoxically, gender equality has been fused with the constitutional question and was enshrined within the 1998 Belfast Agreement (henceforth Agreement) which sought to bring an end to political violence (Ward 2004). Ostensibly progressive in its intent, many would argue that parity has not yet been achieved; women still remain on the peripheries of the political landscape and are largely underrepresented in most sectors (Ward 2004). However, this underlying, social tension, traditionally considered to be of secondary importance to the political conflict, is becoming increasingly 'visible' (Burk 2003) as the commemoration of the conflict in public space gains increasing currency in peacetime.

Dissecting memory and gender in the commemorative landscape

Compelling work within a number of disciplines has, of late, begun to illuminate the potential of cultural landscapes to reflect and shape contemporary social and political identities and values (Foote 1997; Till 1999; Shackel 2003; Lahiri 2003). Best known perhaps for their 'emblematic

features' (Whelan 2003) or 'materialized discourses' (Schein cited in Dwyer 1999), cultural landscapes embed and convey meaning and are consequently inexorably linked to memory, power and place. Yet they are not solely representative or passive; their meanings are negotiated, disputed and questioned through the dual processes of materialisation and memorialisation. A growing body of research recognises the dynamism of material cultures, emphasising their ability to influence and mobilise those who read them (Anderson and Tolia-Kelly 2004; Hoskins 2007). Invariably selective, they present partisan interpretations of the past onto landscapes of the present.

Memorial landscapes are inevitably gendered and often propagate specific ideas about men and women and their roles within society or within the nation (Monk 1992). Commemorative landscapes, particularly those which evoke the memory of war, are among the most gendered, as they largely document (and subsequently reproduce) the experiences and narratives of men (Muzaini and Yeoh 2005), and often elide or complicate the interpretations of women (Johnson 1994; Morris 1997). This phenomenon is inexorably bound to nationalism and nationhood as countries emerging from war often attempt to restore the ideals of masculinity (Ashe 2006a) such as national pride, courage, physical strength and self-sacrifice. Nations as Nagle (1998) asserts are inherently patriarchal and nationalism (which can be understood as a narrative of the nation that binds a collective people – Layoun 1991, 410), according to Enloe (1990, 45), emanates from 'masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope'. The US history wars of the 1960s and 1970s find particular resonance here. Heritage sites across the US had traditionally and largely focused upon the narratives of 'white men' therefore excluding those of disadvantaged social groups such as women and ethnic minorities. The Feminist and Civil Rights Movements sought to challenge this hegemony by demanding inclusion. Yet inclusion has not necessarily guaranteed parity. Where women are included in the remembering of war they are often stereotypically gendered, again a process innately connected to nation-building. Israeli war commemorations, for example, pay homage to women as icons or symbols of the nation (Melman 2002; Baumel 2002; Feige 2002), to be defended and protected. In France after the First World War, memorials depicted women either as grieving wives and mothers or as icons of the victorious nation (Edwards 2000). Commemoration, as Sherman (1996, 84) suggests, served a specific function – to restore the socio-cultural (gender) order that the war had disrupted. Presenting women in their pre-war (domestic) roles effectively marginalised and arguably oppressed their experiences of independence (Sherman 1996), while depicting the men as the heroes of war/protectors conformed to masculinist ideas about the nation. Recent efforts to reinstate and re-inscribe women's experiences of the world wars have resulted in the erection of monuments in London and Sydney paying homage to the diversity of female participation, but this occurrence has been limited in its scope (Trefalt 2001). It took some 10 years of protest and pressure after the dedication of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in 1983 before the Vietnam Women's Memorial, the first memorial to acknowledge the military sacrifices of women on the mall in Washington DC, was finally constructed, arguably as a placatory gesture rather than a genuine attempt to recognise female interpretations of Vietnam. As Carlson Evans (1993) notes:

> Historically women who have served humanity during America's struggles and wars are not included in the artistic portrayals. They slip into history unrecognized and forgotten compounding the myth that they either did not serve or that their service was not noteworthy. They too, had disappeared off the landscape of the Vietnam era.

Commemorating the conflict in Northern Ireland has followed a similar pattern of privileging and perpetuating male narratives. The peacetime years have witnessed the proliferation of memory-work across the region as disputant communities vie for the representation of their respective experiences and interpretations of the Troubles. At the fore of

this work has been physical tangible memorialisation in the form of monuments, plaques and street murals. These memorials accompany a growing commemorative civic infrastructure where community centres pay homage to paramilitary (male) heroes; sporting facilities remember the local dead and streets/roads are named after prominent political figures. Wedded to this commemorative material culture are expressions of loss, accusations of blame, conflicting interpretations of the past and present, and telling insights into rival territorial ideologies. Commemorations thus serve as an extension of the tribal politics that continue to exist in Northern Ireland as they demarcate and contest Nationalist/Republican and Unionist/Loyalist boundaries (McDowell 2006). They often become what Boyer (1994, 321) terms 'rhetorical topi'; sites of repeated sanctification through dramaturgical and territorial acts such as unveilings, wreath-laying, parading and annual services. 'Peace' has occasioned a period of reflection and renegotiation, giving society an opportunity to dissect its experiences. While cultural landscapes have provided a space to debate some of the more uncomfortable truths surrounding the origins, realities and ramifications of the Troubles, they simultaneously operate to re-inscribe gendered narratives of the past (and present) where the multiple experiences of women in Northern Ireland continue to be either obscured or male-defined.

Women and the war throughout the Troubles

Explorations of the relationships between nationalism, warfare and gender have gained increasing momentum within feminist scholarship in recent times (Early 2000; Racioppi and O'Sullivan See 2000). This work has probed women's participation in the construction and contestation of national identities (Enloe 1990, 1993; Sullivan 1999); the role of female combatants (Ward 1989; Moghadam 1993; Sharoni 2001; Alison 2003, 2004); the gendered ideological pressure of nationalism (Yuval-Davis 1997); the centrality of motherhood to the national project (Grayzel 1999), and the use of women's bodies as spaces for violence (Buckley 1993; Aretxaga 2001). Successive studies have shown that these experiences are diverse: women's roles within the nation are defined by social practices and influenced by power structures within a particular historical context (Racioppi and O'Sullivan See 2000). While accepting that women's relationships to nationalist projects and the nation is complex, many academics agree that nationalism and ethno-nationalism is profusely patriarchal and embedded largely within conservative discourses (McClintock 1995; Nagle 1998).

According to Aretxaga (1997), inter-communal conflict like that of Northern Ireland is often thought of as an exclusively male 'terrain'. However, in such conflicts, women are inevitably drawn in and forced to play active roles, although those roles are often stereotypically gendered. Ward argues that the roles assigned to men and women within Northern Ireland in both national projects (Irish nationalism – which aspires to a United Ireland – and British unionism – which seeks to uphold the Union with Britain) have been and continue to be gendered and strongly influenced by 'myths, symbolism and national rhetoric' (Ward 2004, 502). Throughout the Troubles, women were, for the most part, delegated domestic roles that were wedded to competing ethno-nationalist ideologies. Nationalist/Republican rhetoric, for example, expected Irish Catholic women to produce large families to increase the Catholic vote 'for Ireland'. A Catholic majority in Northern Ireland, it was hoped, would spell the end of Unionist hegemony and pave the way for a United Ireland. Unionist/Loyalist women meanwhile were expected to support 'Ulster's Loyal Sons', (Cockburn 1998; Coulter 1998), pertaining to the ideal that (Protestant) women were primarily dutiful wives and mothers and were secondary to their husbands who were solely responsible for safeguarding the Union, a belief compounded, as Sales (1998) believes, by a series of male-dominated institutions such as the Orange Lodge. Both Republican and Loyalist women were expected to be keepers of the 'home flame' for imprisoned

freedom fighters, and as wives of security forces they lived with the constant fear of their husbands not returning from work. Public spaces in Northern Ireland such as prisons and drinking clubs were, as Dowler (1998) suggests, essentially masculine spaces, spaces which permitted expressions of 'armed patriarchy' (Edgerton 1986, 76). Throughout the conflict private spaces such as the home were stereotypically gendered and quintessentially feminine (Dowler 1998). Throughout the Troubles, however, private and public spaces often became blurred as violence spilled over from the street and penetrated the sanctity of the home which, in identifying its occupants as being from one side or the other, often became the place where killings occurred (Aretxaga 1997; Reid 2005, Ashe 2006a). The sectarian segregation of residential space[2] in Northern Ireland meant that the home could and did become a place of directed violence.

Women were not only implicit or passive participants in the Troubles. A minority of women played more explicit roles outside the domestic sphere and were actively involved in the political realm, particularly during the early years of violence. In the 1970s, for example, a group of predominantly Catholic women formed the Derry Peace People in response to the brutal killing of Ranger Best, a 19-year-old from the Creggan Estate in Derry/Londonderry who was shot by the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA) while home on leave from the British Army. Yet this type of participation was, as Ashe (2006b, 162; also Ruddick 1989) argues, quintessentially feminised under the rubric of 'female principles' of non-violence and an instinctive maternal response to protect, which appeared to have been the catalysts for the group's formation. During their brief history, the women facilitated exchange between Republicans and politicians and frequently lobbied for civil rights before being pushed out of the political sphere as a result of what Hammond Callaghan (2002, 35) believes to have been 'structural inequalities including gender conditions'. Similarly the motivations behind the 1970s Peace People (who again were entirely female) had their roots in the killings of three children, conforming to what may be seen to be stereotypical maternal values (McWilliams 1995; Ashe 2006a).

A small number of women also participated in paramilitary activity (Alison 2004). In Republican spheres, for example, women became embroiled in Republican violence from an early stage and community resistance within nationalist ghettos was frequently orchestrated by females who played active roles in protests. Republican women played varied roles in the military 'struggle' to forcibly remove Britain from Ireland and this extended to engaging in active service such as carrying out killings and bombings. Female combatants within Republicanism also tended to be more militarily active than Loyalist women, although a minority of the latter did participate in the paramilitary group the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). It is important to recognise, however, that the involvement of women in combat was often feminised (by men *and* women) as female combatants frequently employed their femininity and the associations with it to their advantage by using their bodies to transport or hide weapons (and by manipulating the security forces' reluctance to search females). One woman I interviewed spoke candidly about hiding guns in her baby's pram as she made her way through Belfast City Centre: 'It was easy. They [the security forces] didn't see women and children as a threat' (Interview April 2006).

Despite their involvement, women tended not to exert as much influence as men within paramilitary organisations (Buckley 1993; Morgan 1996), partly because they were forbidden from participating in certain activities. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), for example, originally forbade women from carrying out military operations. This general rule was gradually overturned following pressure from women themselves and the realisation that the manipulation of femininity could be advantageous for the military campaign. Gendered inequalities within armed Republicanism continued however, and in 1981 female prisoners in Armagh were excluded from the hunger strikes which resulted in the deaths of 10 of their comrades who were

agitating for political status in the Maze Prison. Work undertaken by Dowler (1998) in West Belfast found that even in 'peacetime' Northern Ireland Republican women felt that their roles in the struggle had gone, and were continuing to go, unnoticed by men. Those interviewed as part of the research expressed disenchantment and disillusionment at the absence of their narratives in Republican culture. They talked specifically about Republican songs which consistently omitted the female struggle and pointed towards imbalances in events like homecoming parties for male prisoners. Even as late as 1998, some four years into the peace process, communal solidarity in Republican West Belfast was, as Dowler (1998) suggests, fabricated so that women still felt ostracised in issues related to gender.

Racioppi and O'Sullivan See (2001) argue that the 'gender regime' which places men above women continues to prevail in post-conflict Northern Ireland in almost every aspect of life. This 'regime' extends to the physical landscape of commemoration to which this article now turns.

Commemorating dead 'men'

Throughout my research I found that physical memorial material in Northern Ireland, perhaps unsurprisingly, provided an overtly male-controlled and male-defined presentation of the Troubles. While almost every one of the 1574 combatants (who were agencies of the state and paramilitary organisations – the majority of whom were men) killed throughout the conflict are commemorated physically in some way, only 30% of the 2074 civilian deaths are marked in the public sphere, compounding the reality that the representation of the conflict in public space focuses on the commemoration of its male participants (McDowell 2006). The commemoration of paramilitary men, in particular, focuses on reproducing and reinforcing masculinity and is bound up in ethno-nationalist territorial politics, with the majority of memorials dedicated to the (male) dead of both Republican and Loyalist organisations located at interfaces and boundaries (McDowell 2006), as they continue to engage in a struggle for space and power. Commemorative campaigns orchestrated by these organisations, which are collectively responsible for 88% of the total number of deaths sustained throughout the conflict, have in many ways come to replace violent conflict and, having gained increasing currency throughout the peace process, reflect, perhaps, a newly found confidence in the political sphere (McDowell 2006, 112). Remembering the past has an obvious political and social value in post-conflict Northern Ireland as rival ideologies vie for territorial and social control in an increasingly segregated society (McDowell 2006). This control is inherently patriarchal and is inexorably tied both to male solidarity and male competitiveness. The claiming of space through memorialisation, then, not only constitutes almost a 'war by other means' but serves to reproduce the wartime gender order/regime. It is the paramilitary men who decide who, what, where and when to commemorate. I attended a number of paramilitary unveilings in both Loyalist and Republican communities. In both circles it was men who unveiled the memorials and who carried out the orations while women watched in a seemingly passive manner.

Loyalist paramilitary commemoration

Loyalism, a variant of Unionism that is essentially working-class, is completely oblivious not just to the roles played by Loyalist women throughout the conflict but to any interpretation of the narratives or experiences of women in its respective communities, despite being an ideology essentially born out of a need to defend the Protestant working classes (both male and female). The conceptual argument for ratifying militant Loyalism originated from the experience of communal conflict in places such as Belfast in the 1960s (Ruane and Todd 1996), when Loyalist

paramilitaries vowed to protect the Protestant community from IRA terrorism, thereby legitimating violence orchestrated against Catholics.

Since 1994, Loyalist paramilitary organisations such as the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association (which collectively sustained 166 deaths) have embarked on an ambitious and audacious campaign to commemorate their respective organisations across urban centres such as Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Portadown. The plethora of commemorative murals and memorials to such organisations do not reference women in any way in keeping with the semiotics of Unionist identity which reflects its 'staunchly patriarchal values' (Meyer 2000, 120). Street murals are overtly militaristic and aggressive, displaying masked gunmen and weaponry, while the unveiling of gardens of remembrance in Loyalist housing estates are often highly gendered and aggressive spatial displays.

On 19 August 2000, for example, a 'celebration of Loyalist culture' was initiated in the Lower Shankill area of Belfast by Ulster Defence Association/Ulster Freedom Fighters (UDA/UFF) 'C' Company, leader Johnny Adair (Rolston 2003, 2). Central to this event was the dedication of 13 new murals in Hopewell Crescent, Denver Street and Shankill Parade, all claiming to commemorate aspects of Loyalist culture (Rolston 2005, 2). In addition to images of Protestant King William III (who was victorious in the Battle of the Boyne against the Catholic King James II on 1 July 1690[3]) and Oliver Cromwell (whose controversial military campaign in Ireland during 1649 led to the dispossession of Catholic landowners and the massacre of Drogheda's Royalist Garrison), a series of other militant murals commemorated Loyalist paramilitaries killed throughout the Troubles (Rolston 2005). All but one of these 'post-conflict' aggressive, masculine murals celebrated the male authors of Unionist/Loyalist history. As a token gesture to the community, one female narrative was included in the display, a mural commemorating the life of Princess Diana was painted (to curtail community complaints that some of the murals were too militant). When asked why this image was included one woman from the area remarked when interviewed: 'I suppose they [the UDA] painted it to keep us [women] happy. They probably thought we would identify with it. I certainly don't identify with the violent murals. Actually, I don't know what I identify with anymore'. This specific example alludes not only to a lack of place and identity for Loyalist women in post-Agreement Northern Ireland but also reveals the gendered dimensions of Loyalist paramilitary commemoration.

Throughout the day, armed, masked paramilitaries participated in militant displays including the firing of volleys at the unveiling of each mural. The materialisation and memorialisation of Loyalist identity became an act of territoriality aimed internally rather than at an external 'other'. It compounded hostilities between the various Loyalist paramilitary organisations (most notably between the UDA and the UVF) and instigated a bloody feud which resulted in seven deaths within a three-month period (Guardian 2000). These deaths resulted in the complete polarisation of the Shankill community, with the UDA claiming the Lower Shankill (Hopewell Crescent area) as its own, marked by the commemoration of its victims in the feud (such as Jackie Coulter who was killed by the UVF two days after the 'cultural event' on 21 August). Meanwhile, the UVF claim to the middle Shankill (Woodstock Road), was again marked by memorials dedicated to members of its own organisation who had been killed (such as Sam Rockett who was killed in retaliation for Coulter's death on 23 August). Interestingly it was women from the area who lobbied for an end to the feud. Their efforts, which included organising a peaceful protest, were dismissed by Progressive Unionist Party (PUP – a party which has links to the UVF) member, Billy Hutchinson. While praising the women's attempt to stop the violence he 'seriously doubted that it would do any good' (BBC 2007). Changes in the Shankill's microgeography was mirrored at the macro-level across the city as memorial murals depicting the feud's dead began to replace the historical and cultural memorials which had started to appear after the Agreement, completely eroding not just the wider dissemination of

Figure 1.   A mural commemorating UDA members in the Ballybeen Estate, Dundonald, County Down.

Loyalist culture but more importantly any opportunity to engage with female narratives of the past or acknowledge their political voices in the present.

Loyalist memorials continue to propagate wartime gender identities and influence continuing hostilities within Loyalist communities. On 11 September 2004, for example, the UVF held a Remembrance Day event for 'fallen friends and comrades' attached to the 2nd Battalion of the UVF in South Belfast, the objective was not only to remember those who had sacrificed their lives but to reaffirm social control of Loyalist strongholds (Combat 2004). 'Shows of strength' (which typically encompasses the firing of shots in public) by armed,

masked members of the organisation were accompanied by orations at overtly male memorial sites paying homage to UVF combatants in Sandy Row, the Village and Donegall Pass (Loyalist housing estates). Interestingly, many women participated in this gendered display by assuming their roles as passive bystanders, lining the streets and clapping while the men assumed not only control of the remembering of their pasts but social control of their present.

Ward (2004), researching gender and Unionism in Northern Ireland, interviewed a series of Unionist and Loyalist women about their representation in the political/public sphere. Many of the respondents commented on the lack of positive or indeed of any female imagery within Unionist or Loyalist symbolism. As one woman noted: 'When … I visited those murals today it was the first time I realised that there was nothing for women … and let's face it, it wasn't only men who suffered throughout the Troubles' (cited in Ward 2004, 302; also see Ward 2002). One particularly powerful example perhaps of the complex gendering of Loyalist commemoration can be found in a conversation I had with a woman as I photographed a memorial to UVF volunteers in Derry/Londonderry. Affixed to it was a large poster with the warning 'Do not touch – the UVF' reinforcing the idea that ownership of the past was the preserve of the organisation in the present. It transpired that her son was one of the men commemorated. He had, she told me, been killed by Republicans some years before. Masked men brandishing guns was the image chosen to represent the essence of her son's life; nothing in that particular image and the scores like it tell anything of the women left behind.

Republican commemoration

Republican commemoration, since the 1994 paramilitary ceasefires, pays homage largely to a war fought by male combatants. Across Northern Ireland hundreds of plaques, monuments, street names and wall murals remember all those who died for not only the 'recent conflict' (1969–1999) but also the 'century long struggle' (Arthur 1997) to forcibly remove Britain from Ireland. This is illuminated in the extensive contemporary memorialisation of 10 paramilitary men who died in the Maze Prison on hunger strike whilst agitating for political status in 1981. Despite the fact that Republican women in Armagh prison (used to house female paramilitary prisoners) had embarked on similar protests to their male counterparts in 1980, the commemoration of the hunger strike, which is considered one of the most symbolically important historical events within modern Republicanism (see O'Malley 1990; Arthur 1997), remains predominantly male. Two examples illustrate this argument. In March 2000, the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), the political wing of the Republican paramilitary group, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), erected an illegal monument in Derry City Cemetery to commemorate the hunger strike (Irish Times 2000). Three of the ten hunger strikers were members of the INLA while the other seven were IRA volunteers. The grandiose black marble stone was accompanied by an elaborate figurative sculpture of a masked man in paramilitary uniform, wearing darkened glasses, a beret, and brandishing a gun. While the memorial was attacked by many of the city's residents for being provocative and glorifying Republican violence, some women were doubly offended, believing that the memorial also represented a hyper-masculine space. Former female combatants interviewed as part of this research were also unhappy (in private) with the memorial as a symbol of the Republican struggle as it omitted their contribution. As one noted: 'I can't believe they used that particular image to depict the hunger strike. Okay, it was men who died in that particular campaign, but we (women) were involved in the struggle on all sorts of different levels' (Interview July 2005).

A similar statue was unveiled by the IRA on 13 July 2001 when (male) Republicans in the adjoining villages of Cappagh and Galbally in County Tyrone held a 'commemoration weekend' in honour of one of the dead hunger strikers, Martin Hurson (An Phoblacht 2001a).

The weekend's events encompassed an anniversary mass; a lecture; a play; an exhibition; Gaelic football memorial competitions; and a parade, culminating in the unveiling of an eight-foot elaborate figurative statue of a man dressed in paramilitary uniform and brandishing a gun which not only paid homage to Hurson and his comrades but also to Tyrone's entire 'patriot dead'. These included eight IRA volunteers who were killed by the SAS on 8 May 1987 in Loughall during a controversial shoot-to-kill incident as they prepared to mount an attack on the local police station. An unarmed civilian who was passing by at the time was also killed. In using the

Figure 2.   A statue of a Republican volunteer unveiled as part of the 2001 Hunger Strike Commemorations in the village of Cappagh, County Tyrone.

local Catholic chapel, the shared community centre and the Gaelic Athletic Association Club in Galbally, Republicans were able to fully employ *all* the available resources in the village. For that weekend Galbally became an entirely Republican place while the memorial erected in the adjoining village of Cappagh left a permanent reminder of both the weekend and the Republican movement's claim to the area. The blurring of social institutions within this tiny population and the siting of the large concrete statue of a masked gunman reinforces the idea of not only a Republican place but also of a hyper-masculine space which projects control, enmity and power. Both commemorations are inherently masculine and challenge assumptions that nationalism is not gendered (see Racioppi and O'Sullivan See 2000; Nagle 1998).

While a high percentage of memorials exist for every one of the 294 IRA volunteers (McKittrick et al. 2004, 1531) who died throughout the Troubles (and even including those pre-dating the conflict itself as well as those who had died from natural causes), the commemoration of Republican women has not been as pronounced, though it does exist (this may be attributed to the fact that former male Republican prisoners are responsible for the majority of memory-work). Notable exceptions include the memorialisation of prominent IRA female volunteers such as Mairead Farrell, who was killed by the SAS while on 'active service' in Gibraltar in 1988. Unarmed at the time, the death of Farrell and her two comrades occasioned much controversy, and the subsequent ruling of the European Court of Justice that the killings were unlawful further ensured Farrell a place in Republican hagiography. Indeed, the extensive commemoration of Farrell and her elevated importance in Republican hagiography only reinforces Enloe's assertions that women are often given symbolic roles either as icons of nationhood, to 'be elevated or defended of as the booty or spoils of war' (Enloe 1990, 45).

The (male) architects of commemoration

Women, as we have seen, have been absent from much of the commemorative process even in instances which involve the commemoration of 'their' men. Two of the most poignant examples of the gendered nature of paramilitary commemoration surfaced during interviews with female members of victims' groups. One woman spoke of her disgust with Sinn Féin and the IRA over the commemoration of her son. He had been killed in a bomb blast when he was 17. His family, 'Nationalist but firmly anti-Republican', did not know that he was in the IRA. She recalled thinking that he had been a civilian victim until paramilitaries turned up at the funeral and tried to impose Republican burial rites on the ceremony. She refused and her son was subsequently buried without military honours in a family, rather than Republican, plot. Her grief, however, was reignited when an IRA memorial commemorating him and other volunteers was erected some 15 years later in a public space not far from her home: 'A man just came to the house and said that they were putting his name on a monument and that was that. I had no choice. It brought it all back' (Interview February 2005). The sight of her son's name alongside those she 'abhors' was 'too much', leading her to seek the support of a victims' group. Her story is not unique and was repeated by several other mothers interviewed. The sister of a woman who also lost a teenage son during the Troubles spoke of how badly that woman had been affected after seeing her son commemorated and glorified by Loyalist paramilitaries on wall murals and plaques throughout her estate: 'How could he have been in an organisation like that? He was only a kid! It's killing her you know, to look at his face every day' (Interview March 2005).

Both women shared similar experiences of losing 'ownership' over their private grief to paramilitary organisations. Their stories point towards a highly gendered commemorative landscape controlled and dominated by paramilitary 'men'. In the case of the mothers in the two examples discussed above, both women are stripped of even their most stereotypical gendered roles of mothers and protectors as paramilitaries continue to play out their hyper-masculine roles

(Alison 2004, 447). The production of fear (Shirlow 2001, 2003) is in many ways central to this role and rests on a male/aggressive and female/passive dichotomy. The experience of the two mothers discussed here magnifies the conflict of interest between private and public grief and point towards the continued existence (at least within communities with paramilitary ties) of a patriarchal society that privileges men. At the point of writing, the memorials remain despite the opposition of both mothers.

Yet it is not just within paramilitary cultures that women are elided from the commemorative process. Security force commemoration, inadvertently, perhaps, follows a similar pattern. The British Army and the locally recruited Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) became targets for the IRA throughout the conflict as it sought to forge reunification with the Irish Republic and forcibly remove Britain from the North. As agencies of the British state, these organisations bore the brunt of Republican violence and sustained between them some 1000 fatalities. The killings of RUC and UDR members (again the majority of whom were male), in particular, impacted greatly upon many small communities across Northern Ireland. As with many conflicts where combatants are predominantly male, the deaths of fathers, husbands and sons directly affected mothers, wives and daughters. In the aftermath of the Troubles, wives of the security force dead have often come into conflict with the official commemoration of their husbands or have been delegated secondary roles. For example, the inclusion of a monument to dead prison officers, 29 of whom were killed throughout the conflict, at the Ulster Ash Grove at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, England, occasioned considerable controversy between the state and the families of the dead. Many widows were not invited to the unveiling ceremony at Ash Grove and the small number that did attend complained of being 'treated shabbily' (Belfast Telegraph 2003). Other women resented the fact that the memory of their dead had been subject to a policy of distancing, with England rather than Northern Ireland providing the only viable space to commemorate.

Bringing in the women: placatory tactics, gender parity or political expediency?

It is important to question the motivations behind some of more recent attempts to include women in male representations of the Troubles. Discontent at the absence of women from the contemporary presentation of the conflict was first raised by a feminist and political activist in the city of Derry, Nell McCafferty, in 1995 in an article which she wrote for the Irish magazine *Hot Press*: 'You are now entering Women-Free Derry' (Dawson 2005, 165). McCafferty argued that women in the city had played important roles throughout the Troubles and were being sidelined in the (male) presentation of the city's history. Her title played on the famous (or infamous) mural: 'You are now entering Free Derry', located in the Bogside area of the city. The mural was painted on a gable wall in 1969, following violent clashes between the RUC and local residents, as a message to state forces that they were unwelcome. This seminal mural, according to Jarman (2001, 7), was the first transformation of public space by Nationalists in Northern Ireland. It marked the community's physical struggle against the state for the duration of the Troubles and was hugely controversial. The 1954 Flags and Emblems Act had been used to ban Nationalist visual displays wherever they were likely to cause offence. This was, as Jarman (2001b, 232) suggests, 'often interpreted to mean anywhere in Northern Ireland'. 'Free Derry', became the key symbol of communal attitudes and collective resistance in the city and has long survived the terraced houses that it was painted onto (McCann 1980). Throughout the conflict, the Bogside became the focus for dynamic mural painting as various muralists inscribed provocative narratives onto gable ends. With the inception of the first ceasefires in 1994, a group of three (male) muralists locally known as the Bogside Artists (the name they gave themselves) began chronicling the area's volatile history onto a streetscape that has since become known as

the 'people's gallery'. The first murals though were predominantly 'male', depicting the Battle of the Bogside (a period of violent clashes between state forces and local residents in 1969), the 14 (male) victims of Bloody Sunday (who were shot dead by the British Army in 1972 during a civil rights march) and young boys rioting. Following McCafferty's criticisms (although the Artists deny that she was the catalyst for this; Dawson 2005), two murals were painted to include female interpretations of the past (and to address alleged female discontent in the present). The first mural depicted a local Republican woman, Bernadette Devlin, who played an integral role in the Troubles agitating for civil rights and galvanising Republican protests. The mural reproduced the familiar scene of Devlin, who later became a Member of Parliament, shouting through a loudspeaker. In the background the artists included an image of a woman on her hands and knees clashing a bin-lid to alert the local community of the British Army's presence. A further particularly powerful mural commemorated a victim of the alleged state killing of 14-year-old Annette McGavigan, whom they painted in her school uniform.[4] In the background a silhouette of a gun accompanied the brightly coloured outline of a butterfly. That the inscribing of these narratives were decided by and even left to men, reinforces the gendered stereotype of male/active, female/passive.

In the small number of instances where women's narratives have been included in the representation of the Troubles, as in the above examples, they have often been dictated by political expediency or have been merely placatory gestures or correctives to criticisms. Sinn Féin's (the political wing of the IRA which is currently the largest Nationalist party in Northern Ireland) electoral strategy since the 1998 Agreement has attempted to redirect the marginalisation felt by many women within the political arena and within Republican narratives. Speaking at a commemorative tree planting for the 1981 hunger strikers in West Belfast in May 2001, party president Gerry Adams asserted:

> We [the community] are blessed to even be remotely associated with these men who died on hunger strike because they brought our struggle to a moral threshold. The struggle, if it is to be successful, is about building an Ireland of equals, building a national Republic. (Irish Times 2001)

The Ireland of 'equals' envisaged by Adams sought to readdress gender issues, using memorialisation to reach out to a critically important voting group, women. He used this opportunity to invite everyone in the Republican family, including women, to get involved in remembering the hunger strike. The party's contemporary rhetoric pays homage increasingly to the important roles of Republican women in the 'struggle' for Irish freedom and seeks to rewrite women into history. This has involved, however, ignoring the Republican movement's own involvement in the ill-treatment of women throughout the Troubles. While feminist writers have been quick and right to document the state's use of sexual violence against women, few have interrogated the role of paramilitaries. During the 1980s, the IRA, for example, instigated a campaign of public sexual degradation (tarring and feathering) of Catholic women who forged relationships with British soldiers (Harkin and Kilmurray 1985). This campaign was particularly acute in Nationalist estates such as Creggan in Derry and in the New Lodge area of Belfast. Sexual violence has not been the only form of violence orchestrated against women. The banishment or killing of husbands and sons who were thought to be informers occasioned severe emotional trauma, while the deliberate and brutal killing of women themselves, such as Jean McConville (widow and mother of 10, thought to have assisted an injured soldier outside her home), represented the worst form of violence against women. One woman interviewed as part of this research told the tragic story of her son, once an IRA volunteer, who was banished from Northern Ireland on orders from the organisation's leadership following allegations that he worked for the police as an informer. His mother consistently lobbied for his safe return. After assuring that his life would be safe her son returned home only to be shot dead shortly after (Interview March 2006).
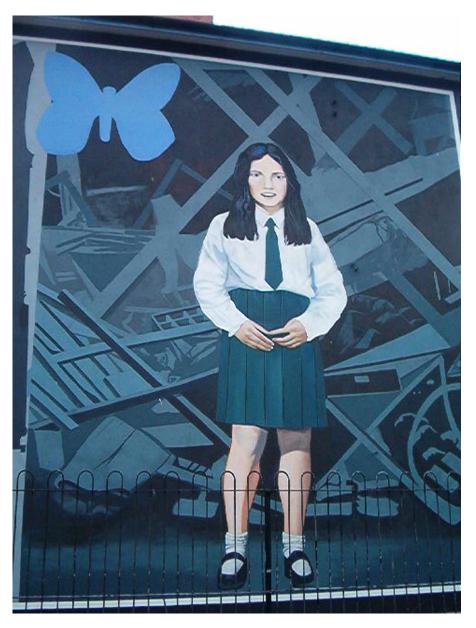
Figure 3.   The Bogside Artists' painting of Annette McGavigan in the Bogside, Derry, County Derry.

The memorialisation of women within Republicanism has been just as selective and serves to reproduce narratives of femininity. While the party and movement more generally have elided memories which they are embarrassed or ashamed of, they have been careful to commemorate politically 'valuable' women as distasteful as this may appear. The party's commemoration of Nora McCabe, for example, a civilian mother of three who was shot by the British Army the day after Joe McDonnell, one of the 10 hunger strikers, died is particularly insightful. McCabe embodies the more traditional gendered stereotype of an innocent, a mother and a peacekeeper, and her place within Republican hagiography has a specific value. On 9 July 2000 a

commemorative mural was unveiled by Sinn Féin member, Tom Hartley, for McCabe, 16-year-old John Dempsey and 15-year-old Daniel Barrett who were also shot by soldiers during in 1981. In an emotive oration, Hartley proclaimed:

> Over the dead bodies of a mother, a hunger striker and two children, the British state in the hideous political form of Maggie Thatcher heaped pain, suffering and injustice upon the shoulders of our community ... Nora McCabe died because the British government needed to terrorise the republican and nationalist community ... Systematic brutality and injustice were the instruments of British domination. English government in Ireland has always sought to drown out our cry for freedom in the despair of our pain. (Hartley 2000, 2)

McCabe's role as a mother is magnified by the Republican movement in order to question the morality of the British state and to solicit empathy from the local community. Ironically the privileging of this role did not extend to other mothers killed by the Republican movement such as the previously mentioned Jean McConville. On 26 July 2001 a further memorial, a black marble plaque with a drawing of McCabe, was unveiled by the party in Linden Street just off the Falls Road at the site where McCabe died (An Phoblacht 2001b). Also commemorated were two further victims of security force shootings from that period: 21-year-old Peter Doherty (whose status is contested); and INLA volunteer Emanuel (Matt) McLarnon. The fact that McCabe is commemorated alongside one known and one possible paramilitary reinforces this idea of a communal struggle where every member of the community has a specific role to play, including women. It reflects a campaign of state terror inflicted against the whole community and not just towards combatants. Smyth (2004, 560) suggests that this idea of a communal struggle originates from the historically volatile relationship between the state and paramilitary groups. Such paramilitary groups 'use terror' and the state often responds with security measures that have secondary consequences of increasing the level of hostility felt by the local community toward the state. State terror undertaken in an effort to deal with an invisible enemy, whether

Figure 4.   A memorial commemorating Nora McCabe in Linden Street, Belfast, County Antrim.

intentional or inadvertent in the form of house raids, intimidation or in the shootings of unarmed civilians, has had an adverse effect on such communities, thus explaining the relative ease with which Sinn Féin has been able to establish territorial and social control over many Republican communities across Northern Ireland. By playing on the mistrust felt towards the state and indeed by including women in this equation, the party can consequently demonstrate the value of an independent Republican place to the community.

Conclusion

In sum, it would appear that commemoration of the Troubles in post-conflict/peacetime Northern Ireland has concretised and propagated the gender identities produced by some 30 years of ethno-nationalist violence. The post-war roles of both men and women have been arguably dictated by their conflict experiences. Just as the combatants determined the intensity, duration and the structure of the conflict, they now influence much of what society remembers in public spaces across the region. The result is a commemorative landscape acknowledging the narratives of its male participants and blurring and disrupting the many conflicting interpretations of those caught up in conflict, many of whom were women. More importantly, though, the materialisation of such narratives does not simply represent present-day social relations, it actively mobilises, disrupts and changes them. Despite the efforts of women themselves to disentangle gendered stereotyping of their past experiences, the presentation and negotiation of the Troubles in the public sphere remains overtly male, contrary to the spirit of the Agreement. While women played both implicit and explicit roles in the Northern Ireland Troubles, these roles have not been fully acknowledged on the ground, namely by the male architects of commemoration. Men's narratives and the political conflict more generally have been privileged.

So what roles can women play in the present if they have been written out of the past? Onyejekwe (2005) warns that cultural systems that do not allow women to play major roles during conflict represent a major handicap in that they also exclude women from the conflict resolution process. This is an argument supported by Ward (2004) who believes that the continuing absence of gender parity in peacetime is a major contributing factor in hindering the development of a peaceful and shared future. Recent progress in the Northern Ireland peace process will hopefully re-open the issue of gender equality but whether or not women will (be allowed to) make any significant impact on this vastly changing political landscape remains to be seen.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. It is generally agreed that the Northern Ireland Troubles began in 1969. Created as a response to the Irish problem, which had dominated the political landscape in Britain for much of the nineteenth century, the partition of the island occasioned much resentment manifested in successive waves of violence. Social unrest was particularly acute in the North, intensifying throughout the 1960s to become the period which became known colloquially as the Troubles. The communal divide between Catholic–Protestant, Nationalist–Unionist and Republican–Loyalist appeared to characterise the seemingly sectarian nature of the conflict. Nationalist ideology, for example, focuses on the unification of Ireland through constitutional means. Republicanism shares this objective but has, at times, embraced an armed struggle. Both ideologies see themselves as politically, culturally and historically Irish. Unionists want to maintain the link with Britain and see themselves as politically, culturally and historically British. Loyalism, which is an inherently working-class ideology, is beginning to push for an independent Northern Ireland and distance itself from Unionism. There is also a religious dimension

to this division with many Catholics seeing themselves as Nationalists and many Protestants seeing themselves as Unionists (although this is not absolute).

2. Residential space in Northern Ireland is largely segregated along religious lines and there is evidence to suggest that this has increased since the Agreement. The areas where Catholics and Protestants live side by side are called interfaces and violence is often prevalent at these points.

3. The Battle of the Boyne is extensively celebrated in Northern Ireland by the Orange Order, a Protestant religious institution. It is celebrated on the Twelfth of July following the change over from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1752.

4. Locals believe that McGavigan was shot by soldiers during an exchange with the IRA (for more see McKittrick et al., 97–98; also see Irish Times, 1999).

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ABSTRACT TRANSLATION

Conmemorando a los 'hombres' muertos: incorporando el género en el pasado y el presente de la Irlanda del Norte post conflicto

La guerra juega un papel decisivo a la hora de dar forma y negociar las identidades de género. ¿Pero, qué rol tiene la paz en disipar o reafirmar el orden de género en los contextos de post conflicto? Basándose en una creciente literatura internacional sobre paisajes representativos y en un trabajo de campo etnográfico en Irlanda del Norte entre 2003 y 2006, este artículo analiza la conmemoración, en tiempos de paz, de los "Problemas" de Irlanda del Norte para estudiar los matices de género. De forma reveladora, los paisajes conmemorativos cultivados desde el comienzo de los cese de fuego paramilitares en 1994 privilegian las interpretaciones masculinas del pasado (y, por lo tanto, del presente). La igualdad de género, a pesar de estar consagrada en el Acuerdo de Belfast de 1998, que buscó poner un fin a casi tres décadas de violencia etno-nacionalista, sigue siendo una utopía esquiva, mientras los monumentos continúan propagando roles específicos para los hombres y las mujeres en el "proyecto nacional". Mientras las ideologías masculinas del Republicanismo/Nacionalismo irlandés y el Unionismo/Lealismo británico inscriben sus respectivos pasados en disputa en el paisaje callejero, las narrativas de las mujeres han sido desdibujadas y trastocadas, creando la necesidad de preguntarse ¿qué rol pueden tener ellas en el futuro?

Palabras claves: Irlanda del Norte; género; conflicto; conmemoración; nacionalismo