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Transmuting Tragedy: The Political Martyrdom of the Executed Leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising in Irish Visual Arts

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TRANSMUTING TRAGEDY: THE POLITICAL MARTYRDOM OF THE EXECUTED LEADERS OF THE 1916 EASTER RISING IN IRISH VISUAL ARTS

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ABSTRACT

TRANSMUTING TRAGEDY: THE POLITICAL MARTYRDOM OF THE EXECUTED LEADERS OF THE 1916 EASTER RISING IN IRISH VISUAL ARTS

Megan Howard, Master of Fine Art, 2023

Thesis Directed by: Kelly Scheffer, Professor, M.A.

The Easter Rising of 1916 marked a defining moment in Irish history, as a group of Irish nationalists sought to overthrow British rule and establish an independent Irish Republic. While the rebellion was initially unsuccessful, it was a pivotal moment in Irish history that sparked a wave of national mourning and resistance following the execution of its leaders by the British government. Such a transition occurred with the careful and deliberate shaping of their legacy by their families with the aid of the Irish Catholic Church. This thesis explores the depiction of the executed leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising in the Irish visual arts, with the most significant focus on Dora Sigerson Shorter's *A Monument to Pádraic Pearse and his Comrades, Shot in Easter Week*. Shorter's sculpture was created in the immediate aftermath of the executions and captured the event's emotional impact and the sense of loss and defiance that permeated Irish society. Research conducted within this examines the evolution of the representation of the executed leaders from their initial portrayal as violent rebels to their recasting as heroic martyrs. This thesis will argue that the visual arts have played a central role in the construction of Irish national identity and the commemoration of the Easter Rising, providing a space for reflection, mourning, and resistance.

Dedication & Acknowledgements

To my thesis committee: Professor Kelly Scheffer, Dr. Trenton Olsen, and Dr. Geremy Carnes, your guidance in this project has been invaluable. I am very grateful for your feedback and application of your expertise as I worked through this process. Professor Scheffer, you have been an incredible support. I cannot begin to thank you enough for the countless reads of my submissions, your suggestion, encouragement, and your willingness to give me hard advice when needed to ensure I produce the strongest thesis possible.

I also want to express my gratitude to Lorcan Collins and Brian Crowley; their expertise and passion for the 1916 Rising and its leaders have opened my eyes to the complex political, social, and cultural dynamics that shaped this pivotal moment in Irish history. Their continual dedication to preserving and promoting the memory of the Easter Rising has inspired me and led me down a path that I hope to continue for many years.

Finally, to my beloved partner and family, you have been my rock and my source of inspiration throughout this journey. Your unwavering love, support, and encouragement have sustained me through the long hours of research, writing, and editing. Your patience and understanding during my moments of frustration and doubt have been immeasurable. This milestone would not have been possible without you. This dedication would not be complete without mentioning my mother, who introduced me to Ireland. Your love for the Emerald Isle and its rich culture has been infectious, and it has ignited in me a deep curiosity and appreciation for the country's history and heritage.

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Art as a Propaganda Tool: Examining the Use of Visual Arts in Ireland to Transmute the Narrative of the 1916 Easter Rising

Cyril Barrett, a Jesuit Priest and Irish Art Historian, wrote of art as a tool of change. He stated, "Art is not averse to being an instrument for promoting by illustration the cause of religion, morality or patriotism; and some of the finest works of art have been produced in these causes."[1] This thesis intends to examine the use of the visual arts as a propaganda tool in Ireland to transmute the narrative of the executed leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising into political martyrs, thus creating a precedent for achieving independence by any means necessary. This examination will focus primarily on art biased towards the nationalist viewpoint and its use as an influential tool in harvesting nationalistic support. Barrett notes that for "nationalistic art… to be effective," it requires an "appeal to the masses in the way all propagandist art must."[2] Therefore, artworks focused on within this discourse will be publicly displayed and, in some cases, distributed.

Analysis of this topic will primarily surround Dora Sigerson Shorter's sculpture, *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week* (Figure 1).[3] This work consists of a white Carrera marble statue depicting the final moments of an Irish soldier whose broken body is supported by a motherly figure (Figure 2). The sculpture is covered by an ashlar limestone pergola for protection from the elements (Figure 3). The pergola features a bowed roof of a hipped design supported by square-based columns with cushion capitals, decoratively

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[1] Cyril Barrett, "Irish Nationalism and Art II: 1900-1970," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 91, no. 363 (2002): 238, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30095555.

[2] Barrett, "Irish Nationalism and Art II: 1900-1970," 235.

[3] In accordance with feminist principles, Dora Sigerson Shorter, along with other prominent feminists of her era, elected to adopt her maiden name in conjunction with her married name. Consequently, this paper will refer to her as "Sigerson Shorter," in accordance with her preference.

adorned with Celtic knot carvings. A Celtic interlaced band continues across the gables, with a simple cross carved directly above the marble statue (Figure 4). The date "1916" is in relief on the gable apexes at the north and south. The west side of the monument features a bronze plaque inscribed with English and Irish translations of Sigerson Shorter's poem "The Sacred Fire"(Figures 5- 6). All other sides of the monument are open, allowing a view of the centerpiece sculpture. Sigerson Shorter's monument stands approximately 300 centimeters tall (just under ten feet), allowing the sculptural figures to achieve an almost life-size depiction with an approximate height of six feet.

Dora Sigerson Shorter was an established poet and skilled sculptor with a rich nationalist background. She was born the eldest daughter of a revered medical doctor, author, and Gaelic enthusiast Dr. George Sigerson.[4] Her mother was notable in her own right as a nationalist poet, novel author, and contributor to the Irish Literary Revival in the late nineteenth century.[5] The life works of Sigerson Shorter denote the resounding impact left on her by her parents' nationalist beliefs and the company kept by her father, a company with whom she also frequently interacted. In describing her early years, Douglas Hyde notes that Sigerson Shorter's childhood was filled with a carousel of "patriots who… suffered for [their] love of country." These early influences profoundly impacted the young nationalist's later political associations and sense of Irish pride. [6]

[4] Jessica March, "Shorter, Dora Sigerson," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, ed. James Quinn (Royal Irish Academy, 2009), https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.008065.v1.

[5] Richard Bleiler, "Dora Sigerson Shorter (1866-1918)," *The Green Book: Writings on Irish Gothic, Supernatural and Fantastic Literature*, no. 13 (2019): 35, https://www.jstor.org/stable/48536212.

[6] Douglas Hyde,"II.: Dora Sigerson Shorter," Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review 7, no. 25 (1918): 140.

Hyde asserts that her vibrant youth resulted in "two main currents running through her work output." [7] He identifies the first current in her work as "intensely patriotic and national," inspired predominantly by her formative years within Dublin.[8] While her sense of nationality may have been born in Dublin, it was a life-long value, with Hyde noting it "grew more insistent with the years."[9] Hyde identifies the other current through her life as the "overmastering desire to tell a really striking story as concisely and graphically" as possible.[10]

Sigerson Shorter's prestige is predominantly rooted in her achievements as a poet. Within the literary circles of Dublin, she was greatly respected and continues to be treasured as one of Ireland's greatest poets. However, Sigerson Shorter's proclivity for the arts was not limited to written media. She developed visual art skills in the medium of sculpture through her studies at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Arts (DMSA), where she socialized with several 1916 revolutionaries, chiefly William (Willie) Pearse (brother of Patrick Pearse) and Countess Constance Markievicz.[11] Her associations with these future revolutionary figures furthered her nationalistic devotion and contributed to the loss she felt at the initial failure of the rising.

In the months that followed the Easter Rising executions, Sigerson Shorter applied her efforts to saving the remaining leader, Sir Roger Casement. Casement was captured smuggling in German arms on Good Friday and was sent to London to await sentencing. Sigerson Shorter and her husband launched a campaign against his hanging, which would prove unsuccessful and

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[7] Hyde, II.: Dora Sigerson Shorter, 139.

[8] Hyde, 139.

[9] Hyde, 139.

[10] Hyde, 139.

[11] John Turpin, "The Metropolitan School of Art 1900-1923 (Part I)," Dublin Historical Record 37, no. 2 (1984): 75, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30100627.

significantly contributed to her sorrow. Accordingly, Sigerson Shorter experienced a great depression after the events of 1916. So much so that her husband attributed this and Ireland's wartime struggles as the cause of her early death at fifty-one in 1918. In his autobiography, Clement King Shorter wrote, "It was the strain of the War and Ireland's association with it that killed her. She suffered heart-breaking anguish during the Irish Rising of Easter Week 1916 and the trial of Roger Casement."[12] Deirdre O'Brien notes that Sigerson Shorter was deeply sensitive to the suffering of others, especially those in her homeland of Ireland.[13] O'Brien compares Sigerson Shorter's suffering to the "wild sorrow of a child for an idolized mother."[14]

Before her untimely death, Sigerson Shorter completed several poems in honor of the fallen rebels and, most notably for our purposes, her sculpture, *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week.* An image of Sigerson Shorter's sculpture was published in a posthumous collection of her Nationalist works, *Sixteen Dead Men: and other poems of Easter Week* in 1919 (Figure 7). This work was later reissued under the name *Tricolour* in 1922. She intended the proceeds of this book to fund a monumental version of the statue to serve as a memorial marker for the burial site of the leaders. Unfortunately, Sigerson Shorter's premature death prevented her plans from coming to fruition. Instead, the monument became Sigerson Shorter's funerary monument near the front gates of Glasnevin Cemetary.

This examination seeks to explore the addition of Sigerson Shorter's sculpture to the ongoing efforts of transmuting the tragedy of the Easter Rising by establishing the executed leaders as political martyrs whose deaths paved the way for Irish independence. While this

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[12] Clement King Shorter, *C. K. S.: An Autobiography*, (London: Constable & Co., 1927) 149.

[13] Deirdre O'Brien, "Dora Sigerson Shorter," *The Irish Monthly* 56, no. 662 (1928): 404.

[14] O'Brien, "Dora Sigerson Shorter," 407.

examination will primarily focus on the sculpture *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week,* it will also consider other widely disseminated images and handbills in Ireland and America used to propagate this narrative.

In the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising, martial law was imposed in Ireland, severely limiting Irish citizens' ability to circulate such imagery without the support of the Catholic Church. Due to their exemption from martial law regulations, the Church played a vital role in disseminating these nationalist messages. Thus, this examination will also explore the Church's role in promoting this narrative and the impact of such imagery on the Irish people's collective memory of the Easter Rising.

In order to fully appreciate the significance and impact of these sculptures and images, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of the events that led to their creation. Without such context, the meaning and symbolism of the artwork may be lost or misinterpreted. Therefore, it is necessary to delve into the historical background of the Easter Rising, including the social, economic, and political factors that contributed to the rising tensions between Ireland and Great Britain. Such an examination will include an understanding of the influence of classical art and literature on Irish nationalist sentiments, as well as the evolving artistic styles and techniques of the early 20th century. By exploring the interplay of these factors, including the historical context of the Easter Rising and the artistic and political influences that shaped the creation of Sigerson Shorter's *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*, a deeper understanding and appreciation of the meaning and significance of the imagery and sculpture produced during this pivotal period in Irish history can be gained.

The Easter Rising of 1916 and Collective Memory

To fully understand the context of this artwork, one must have a foundational understanding of the movements and individuals they honor. The Easter Rising of 1916 was a rebellion on April 24-29, 1916, in Dublin, Ireland, led by a small group of Irish artists, poets, writers, and scholars who sought to counter the British colonization that adversely affected the Irish heritage and native culture by establishing Ireland as independent sovereignty. [15]

Colonization is rarely, if ever, present without assimilation. For the colonized, it is not enough to be absorbed within a new culture; they are forced to adopt their colonizing oppressor's cultural norms and values. The Irish were no exception to this standard. Following centuries of colonial oppression of their customs and heritage, the Irish had effectively ceased to be Irish and were in danger of becoming substandard copies of their British overlords.

The Easter Rising rebels hoped to reclaim their country and "save the soul of Ireland," with the armed insurrection serving as their "assertion of independence."[16] The Easter Rising was planned and orchestrated by the secret society of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and included forces from several political and cultural organizations. Among those involved were the Irish Volunteer Army (an army formed as an answer to the Ulster Volunteer Force), Cumann na Mban (the women's branch of the Volunteers), and the Irish Citizens Army (a coed socialist labor organization formed for the protection of striking workers following the 1913 lockout).

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[15] Sean Kinsella, "The Cult of Violence and the Revolutionary Tradition in Ireland," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 83, no. 329 (1994): 21, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30091028.

[16] Piaris F. Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words*, (Dublin: The Office of Public Works, 1990), 44.

IRB Council Members and leaders of the Rising served as the signers of the Irish Proclamation: Thomas Clarke, Seán Mac Diarmada, Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett, Eamonn Ceannt, and James Connolly. The Proclamation was the document formally asserting Ireland's Independence. It was read from the steps of the General Post Office (GPO) at 12:45 pm on April 24, 1916, to mark the official start of the Rising.[17]

Plans for the Rising established an intent to hold several buildings around Dublin to proclaim and obtain Irish independence. The rebels believed that once the Rising was underway, it would garner national support and spread across the country, making it too difficult for the British, who were already heavily involved in the First World War, to calm all uprisings successfully. While several uprisings did occur outside of Dublin, notably in Galway, Enniscorthy, and Fingal, these were much smaller than intended and, thus, were curtailed quickly.[18]

It was also believed that Germany might provide military support.[19] A factor that would have all but ensured an Irish victory. However, the Germans sent only weapons, which were lost in the sinking of the Aud (a German ship tasked with bringing in weaponry for the Rising) on the Friday before Easter.[20]

Despite these setbacks, the Dublin rebels held their primary stronghold, the GPO, for five days. The first two days of the revolution were quite successful for the rebels, securing

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[17] Collins, *1916: The Rising Handbook*, 11.

[18] Collins, 39-40.

[19] Joost Augusteijn, *Patrick Pearse: The Making of a Revolutionary* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 312. This belief was likely related to an official German statement issued in November, 1915 expressing German desire for Ireland to attain independence.

[20] Collins, 39-40.

several retreats from the British. However, by Wednesday morning, reinforcements from Britain arrived in Dublin with heavy artillery, changing the fight's momentum.

The most impactful weapon used by the British was the Ordinance QF 18-pounder field artillery gun. This weapon was intended mainly as a field weapon, making it a ruthless choice for in-city fighting.[21] The ammunition for these guns could be either high explosive or shrapnel. Within Dublin, only shrapnel ammunition was used. “The shrapnel was made up of about nine pounds of small balls of lead-antimony….” [22] A renowned Irish historian, Lorcan Collins, notes that two of these guns were aimed at the GPO, assaulting it from the “northside and the southside.” [23]

The guns were fired almost simultaneously, producing such a “quake” that “every plane of glass in the street was shattered,” and large portions of the city were bombarded with falling hot metal shrapnel.[24] This hot shrapnel fell upon roofs, spreading high flames across the city. The British continued their assault with machine guns and make-shift armored vehicles. They also tunneled through row houses, hoping to gain better positions to target the rebels. The fire caused by the constant shelling eventually spread to the roof of the GPO. Despite numerous attempts to stifle the fire, it burned to such a degree that it melted the roof’s iron bars and thus forced an evacuation by Friday evening.

[21] Collins, 39-40.

[22] Collins, 39-40.

[23] Collins, 39-40.

[24] Collins, 39-40.

Michael O'Rahilly, better known as "The O'Rahilly"- a call back to ancestral clan titles- led a charge out of the building with twelve other soldiers, paving the way for his comrades to evacuate to a row of homes on the next street over, Moore Street. The O'Rahilly's charge successfully distracted the British, allowing many (including several leaders) to escape the GPO. However, it proved fatal for The O'Rahilly, as he was hit with several bullets.

By the Saturday of the surrender, the British forces attacking the GPO had advanced only 150 yards down the street, with eleven soldiers suffering casualties and another twenty-eight sustaining injury.[25] Such lack of progress frustrated the British troops, causing them to turn their anger on innocent citizens in nearby homes, executing fifteen unarmed men whom the British wrongly accused of being rebels.[26]

The End of the Rising and the Executions

After consultation with his military council, the President of the Provisional Government, Patrick Pearse, was forced to surrender to spare the loss of further lives. Seán Mac Diarmada reported that the decision was made after viewing the machine-gun-peppered bodies of three elderly men holding white flags of truce in their hands. Antoine Guillemette asserts that the fallout from the Rising destroyed almost two hundred buildings across Dublin. Casualties of the Rising were estimated to be almost 500, with another thousand severely maimed.[27]

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[25] Collins, 39-40.

[26] Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland Easter 1916* (London: Oxford University Press, 2010),187.

[27] Antoine Guillemette, "Coming Together at Easter: Commemorating the 1916 Rising in Ireland, 1916-1966.'" Doctoral Dissertation, Concordia University, 2013, 19, https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=dcb47544161d0f0344e8162de3656810705f0d3e

Following the surrender orders, the Irish Republican Army was taken to the front garden of the Rotunda Maternity Hospital. Captain Lea Wilson of the British Army issued brutal directives to the captives, stating, "No one must stand up, no one must lie down, as for the needs of nature, anyone who chooses the Rotunda garden for a bedroom can use it as a lavatory as well, and well lie in both."[28] All were stripped naked despite being in the presence of women.

Michael Collins, who later gained international fame for his effective guerrilla warfare campaigns in the Irish War of Independence, recalled witnessing the treatment of several Easter Rising leaders during this time.[29] Joseph Plunkett, terminally ill with Bovine Tuberculosis, was repeatedly kicked, Sean Mac Diarmada, crippled from Polio, was beaten with his walking cane, and Thomas Clarke was mocked and beaten. Michael Collins vowed retribution for this treatment and retold the events to recruit neutral Irishmen to the cause of Nationalism during the War of Irish Independence. During this conflict, he kept his promise of retribution, ensuring the British military leaders responsible for these acts met an untimely end.[30]

Over the next few days, additional participants of the Rising were arrested and temporarily interned at Richmond Barracks, where the leaders were identified and separated. The British Commanding General Maxwell launched an indiscriminate campaign to "arrest all dangerous Sinn Feiners," even those may have taken an "active part in the movement although not in the present rebellion."[31] "As a result, 3,430 men and 79 women were arrested

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[28] Helen Litton, *16 Lives: Thomas Clarke* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2014), 195.

[29] Brian Feeney, *16 Lives: Seán MacDiarmada* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press,2014), 276-77.

[30] Brian Feeney, *16 Lives: Seán MacDiarmada*, 276-77.

[31] Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2006), 273. The term "Sinn Feiners" is used here as a derogatory term referencing those who supported Irish independence or were associated with the Irish Republican Army. This term was later re-used as a term of honor for those opposing British oppression.

immediately following the Rising." [32] Most of those arrested had only a superficial connection with the Rising.[33]

Courts Martial were hurriedly completed and held in secret. William T. Cosgrave (a future President of Ireland) recounted his court-martial, stating, "No person was allowed to appear and speak on behalf of the prisoner, but each prisoner would be permitted to bring a friend with him, whom he could consult and who would be free to advise the prisoner but not address the court."[34] As a result of these court-martials, over 90 death sentences were handed down.[35] The seven signatories of the Irish Proclamation were marked for execution, as well as seven other men, who were considered "leaders" due to their commanding positions within the Rising. One woman, Countess Markievcz, was additionally marked for execution for her part in the Rising; however, her sentence was later commuted to life in prison due to her sex. Historical accounts provide evidence that General Maxwell intended to conduct mass executions as punishment for the audacity of the Rising. Upon arriving in Ireland on April 28, 1916, his second-in-command was ordered to "have a lime pit dug in the yard of Arbour Hill Prison (large enough for fifty bodies)" to hold the remains of the executed parties. [36]

The Courts Martial began on May 2, 1916, with the first executions occurring in the early hours of the following day, May 3, 1916. The initial executions were of Patrick Pearse (for his role as Provisional President & Commandant), Thomas Clarke (for his role as a signatory and

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[32] Townshend*, Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion*, 273.

[33] Guillemette, "Coming Together at Easter: Commemorating the 1916 Rising in Ireland", 19.

[34] William T. Cosgrave, "Witness Statement #268" (Bureau of Military History, Digital), 17.

[35] Joseph E.A. Connell, "Countdown to 1916: The Executions After the Easter Rising," History Ireland 24, no. 3 (2016): 70, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43755275.

[36] Connell, "Countdown to 1916: The Executions After the Easter Rising,"70.

lifetime of rebellious Fenian activities), and Thomas MacDonagh (for his role as a commander and signatory). Pearse was the first to meet his fate at 3:30 am, reportedly whistling a tune on his way to the execution yards. All executions were completed via firing squad and under cover of darkness. Maxwell ordered a medical officer to be present to confirm and certify the death of each individual. Each man was to have a name label affixed to his chest for later identification. Each body was moved from the yard to an awaiting ambulance. Following the day's executions, the victims were transferred to Arbour Hill for burial in quick lime to achieve rapid decomposition. Priests were provided for the final repose of the fallen souls. Historian Joseph Connell notes,

> Each of the men's families requested that their bodies be released to them for burial. But from the outset, Gen. Maxwell was determined that the bodies of the executed men would not be returned to their families. He feared that 'Irish sentimentality will turn those graves into martyrs' shrines to which annual processions etc., will be made. [Hence] the executed rebels are to be buried in quicklime, without coffins. [37]

A total of 14 executions occurred in Dublin. Thomas Kent was executed in Cork on May 9, 1916, and Sir Roger Casement, who was captured before the Rising on April 21, 1916, attempting to smuggle arms into the country to aid in the Rising, was executed on August 3, 1916, in London. The final of the Dublin executions occurred on May 12, 1916, with the executions of Sean Mac Diarmada and James Connolly. Mac Diarmada issued a powerful final statement moments before his death:

[37] Connell, 70.

> I, Seán Mac Diarmada, before paying the penalty of death for my love of Ireland and abhorrence of her slavery, desire to make known to all my fellow countrymen that I die, as I have lived, bearing no malice to any man, and in perfect peace with Almighty God. The principles for which I give my life are so sacred that I now walk to my death in the most calm and collected manner. I meet death for Ireland's cause as I have worked for the same cause all my life. I have asked the Rev. E. McCarthy who has prepared me to meet my God and who has given me courage to face the ordeal I am about to undergo, to convey my message to my fellow countrymen. God Save Ireland.[38]

Following the executions, the fallen leaders of Easter Week 1916 were transformed into martyrs sacrificing their lives for Irish freedom. News of the secrecy of the court-martials and the executions, particularly the brutality of Connolly's execution, shifted the sentiment around the Rising. Citizens who were initially angered by the destruction of the city and the imposition of Martial Law began to view the executed leaders as heroes worthy of praise. General Maxwell was deemed "Bloody Maxwell" and became the scourge of Dublin. Following the outcry from Dublin citizens, further executions were halted, and death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Prisoners were removed from Ireland and interned in camps across Britain. Most notable was the transfer of men to Frongoch, which would later be deemed "The University of Revolution." [39] It was within Frongoch that plans were made for the next rising.

Stories recounting the final moments and hours became powerful ammunition in transforming the executed leaders into Martyrs and their families into living memorial markers as the British made little to no consideration for the victims' families. The Pearses' mother was unable to say her final goodbyes to Patrick. She was en route when the volley of shots rang out. Kathleen Clarke lost her husband, Tom, her closest friend Sean MacDiarmada, and her younger brother Edward (Ned) Daly. Thomas MacDonagh spent his last hours composing a poem for his

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[38] Brian Feeney, *16 Lives: Seán Mac Diarmada* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2014) 303.

[39] Connell, 70.

infant son (that would be widely distributed later). Grace Plunkett (sister-in-law to Thomas MacDonagh) became a wife and an "Easter Widow," all within a few hours, having been allowed to marry Joseph shortly after midnight on May 4, 1916, in the Kilmainham Gaol. Two soldiers guarding Joseph stepped in as witnesses, shifting their rifles from hand to hand as they assisted in the ceremony. The newlyweds were immediately separated following the recitation of their vows.

As Grace awaited her final moments with Joseph, she sketched an image of him at their wedding, her only souvenir from the event (Figure 8). Grace was allowed to see Joseph one final time shortly before his execution. They were given ten minutes together, with one guard maliciously announcing the passing of each minute.[40]

Connolly's family "had hoped he might be spared and then, when he was shot, wanted his body for a family burial. They were refused."[41] McNamara explains the reason for this refusal and its consequences-thus: " The British were intent on obliterating any reminders of the Rising, but the Irish were incensed at this treatment of the men who came to be known as the "Easter Martyrs."[42] The treatment by the British was perceived as merciless and excessively harsh. It even stirred the hearts of those not initially won by the leaders' ideologies. In his research, Fearghal McGarry ascertains, "many witnesses [now] spoke of fighting for freedom and a hatred of British rule," creating a new unity amongst the population within Ireland. [43]

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[40] Piaris F. Mac Lochlainn, *Last words*, 95.

[41] Donald McNamara, "Bloody Instructions: General John Maxwell in Dublin after the Easter Rising," The Princeton University Library Chronicle 63, no. 3 (2002): 559. https://doi.org/10.25290/prinunivlibrchro.63.3.0534.559.

[42] McNamara, "Bloody Instructions: General John Maxwell in Dublin after the Easter Rising," 551.

The Role of the Church in the Aftermath of the Rising

Martial law was implemented at the start of the Rising and endured until the Irish achieved freedom in 1922. As a result, many forms of commemoration were banned, and a strict level of censorship was implemented.[44] Therefore, creativity in commemorations became essential. Due to the British ban on public displays of sympathy for the Easter Rising, the Church was the sole institution able to honor and mourn the executed leaders publicly. The Church was also excused from the harsh censorship laws imposed on the Irish press as there was a fear that censoring religious content could evoke further Irish hostilities. As a result, the *Catholic Bulletin* publication "wrapped its radical separatist politics in carefully constructed religious packaging."[45]

The role of the Church in the martyrdom of the Easter Rising leaders was significant, as the leaders' Catholic faith was a central part of their identity and motivation for their actions. As one of the few areas within Irish culture not constricted by martial laws, it became an essential tool in transforming the narrative of the Rising from a failure to one of triumph. Sarah Benton asserts, "From the moment of martyrdom after the Rising, the priesthood led the Church into the nationalist struggle. It was priests who attended condemned men's executions, heard their confessions, carried their last messages to their mothers, and held masses for them."[46] Noelle Dowling agrees, asserting that due to the presence of church officials at all significant moments

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[43] Fearghal McGarry, "Too Many Histories'? The Bureau of Military History and 1916," History Ireland 19, no. 6 (2011): 26.

[44] Donal Ó Drisceoil, "Keeping Disloyalty within Bounds? British Media Control in Ireland, 1914-19," *Irish Historical Studies* 38, no. 149 (2012): 58.

[45] Ó Drisceoil, "Keeping Disloyalty within Bounds? British Media Control in Ireland, 1914-19," 58.

[46] Benton, Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913-23, 170.

from the beginning of the Rising to the end, "It becomes impossible to entirely separate the Nationalism of the Rising with Catholicism, as Priests were present from the outset of the conflict. Priests were present in most of the uprising locations serving the spiritual needs of the Volunteers."[47]

Guillemette notes that "preaching could not be hindered as easily as publishing"; therefore, sermons were rich fodder for priests to recount the devotion of the "Easter Week Martyrs" in their final moments. [48] Father Albert attended Sean Heuston in his final moments and repeatedly took every opportunity to provide accounts of the young leader's devotion.

Father Albert retells that the blindfolded young rebel kissing a crucifix in preparation:

> "His (Heuston) one thought was to prepare with all the fervour and earnestness of his soul to meet Our Divine Saviour and His Sweet Virgin Mother, to Whom he was about to offer up his young life for the freedom and independence of his beloved country (...) I rushed over to anoint him. His whole face seemed transformed, and lit up with a grandeur and brightness that I had never before noticed. (...) Never before did I realise that man could fight so bravely, and die so beautifully and so fearlessly as did the heroes of Easter Week."[49]

Through such recollections, the final moments of each leader became "canonized and cemented hopes for fulfillment of the 'Faith and Fatherland' ideal.[50] The religious publication *Catholic Bulletin* was essential in distributing the histories and narratives of the Rising. They successfully argued that the documentation of the events was not only an issue of freedom of the

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[47] Noelle Dowling, *Dublin Diocesan Priests and the 1916 Rising*, (Dublin: the Irish Catholic, 2016), 8.

[48] Guillemette, 51.

[49] Mac Lochlainn, 115-116.

[50] Guillemette, 54.

press but was also needed to create an "accurate historical narrative." Church elders advocated that future use of the *Catholic Bulletin* would allow contemporary readers to understand the "true perspective of the lives, the methods, and the motives of the men of Easter Week."[51] Ray Bateson asserts that the records derived from the *Catholic Bulletin* are "the earliest and most accurate of sources relating to the Volunteers." [52] The priests who had known the men wrote many articles and narratives, but all "possessed considerable historical value and conveyed an emotionally charged message."[53] Guillemette writes, "This proved instrumental in making the priests' accounts so coveted after that and placed religious devotion at the core of the Rising's story."[54]

This connection between Nationalism and Catholicism united the Irish independence movement and ensured its eventual success. Fianna Fail propagandist and close confidant to Eamonn de Valera (future President of Ireland), Aodh de Blacam, wrote, "Irish Republicanism was a unique union between the Roman Catholic religion and Irish people" and would usher in a legendary time "when a manhood will arise, among whom Colmcille might walk as he walked with his companions of old."[55]

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[51] Brian P. Murphy, "Telling the Story of 1916: The 'Catholic Bulletin' and 'Studies,'" *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 101, no. 401 (2012): 49, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23209778.

[52] Ray Bateson, "The Dead of the Easter Rising 2016," *Dublin Historical Record* 69, no. 2 (2016): 211–22, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44984386.

[53] Murphy, "Telling the Story of 1916: The 'Catholic Bulletin' and 'Studies,'" 51.

[54] Guillemette, 52.

[55] Benton, 170. Fianna Fáil is a political party in Ireland that was founded in 1926 by the former Irish revolutionary leader, Eamon de Valera. The party emerged as a result of a split within Sinn Féin over the issue of whether to take seats in the Dáil Éireann, the Irish parliament established after the War of Independence. Fianna Fáil rejected the abstentionist policy of Sinn Féin and contested elections, eventually becoming the dominant political party in Ireland for much of the 20th century.

The Role of the Family as Legacy Keepers

The enduring significance of the men who participated in the Easter Rising was largely due to the role played by their families as keepers of their legacy and the influence of the church in transforming them into martyrs. The widows were widely outspoken about the zealous beliefs of their husbands and asserted it was their duty as Irish wives to endure the hardship of losing their husbands to further the Irish freedom fight.

While the "Easter Widows" garnered immense public sympathy, the mother of the Pearse brothers garnered the most (Figure 9). Sarah Benton addresses this in her study of the militarization of Irish women. She notes,

> Women survive in legend as the suffering and bereaved mothers. It was not the sexual partners of men who were dispossessed by the British, but the mothers; not the wives who made the sacrifice of losing their beloved men, but the mothers. Sinn Fein's 1918 election pamphlet appealed for women's vote with 'Save Ireland by voting as Mrs. Pearse will vote,' Mrs. Pearse being the now sacred mother of Patrick and William Pearse, both brothers executed after the Rising. Women's claim is thus, in legend, to be protected and revered as mothers.[56]

Mrs. Pearse became a living symbol of "Mother Ireland" from ancient Irish culture. In the wake of their deaths, Mrs. Pearse embodied the sacrifice and suffering endured by numerous Irish mothers who had lost sons to British authorities across the centuries. This idea of the mother as a sacred figure and the ultimate keeper of Ireland's legacy was exemplified by the political party Sinn Fein's 1918 election pamphlet, which urged women to follow the guidance of Mrs. Pearse as a means of fighting for Ireland.

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[56] Benton, 167.

This argument was particularly compelling as it is rooted in ancient Celtic narratives of women as vital, capable protectors who withstand physical and emotional tribulations. Irish nationalism expanded on this narrative to emphasize the mother as a protector and nurturer of the nation's identity and heritage, with many Irish nationalists invoking the image of the motherland in their rhetoric and imagery. Thus, the concept of a protected and devoted “Mother Ireland” figure was deeply ingrained in Irish nationalist mythology. Dora Sigerson Shorter's work, including her sculpture of Mother Ireland holding the fallen body of Patrick Pearse, conjured this connection between the mother and the nation in powerful ways. Her portrayal of Mother Ireland as a strong, protective figure who cradles Pearse's body in her arms evokes the ancient Celtic narratives of women as protectors and nurturers, while also tapping into the contemporary nationalist discourse around the image of the motherland. In this way, Sigerson Shorter's work captures the deep emotional resonance of the Mother Ireland figure and the enduring power of this mythological and nationalist construct in Irish culture.

The Martyred Leaders in Cultural Ephemera

The leaders of the Rising were also heavily featured in materials following the rebellion. These recollections of the final moments of the leaders and the brutality of their treatment undoubtedly laid the foundation for the martyrdom of the executed. By depicting the leaders of the Easter Rising as heroic figures, these artworks symbolize the struggle against British colonialism and the desire for freedom and autonomy. Following the executions, visual media was used to detail the brutality of the British and stress the need for independence. Such examples of the cultural media used include the highly accepted visual arts, such as painting and sculpture, and the more commonly distributed visual arts, such as theatrical productions, advertisements, and military regalia.

Kilmainham Gaol, where the leaders were detained and executed, played a significant role in reinforcing the narrative of their martyrdom (Figures 10 -11). As Bhreathneach-Lynch writes, "Kilmainham Gaol, a symbol of Ireland's tradition of militant and constitutional nationalism. Leaders of rebellions from 1798 through to 1916 had been detained here and, in some cases, executed."[57] Photographs of the very spot where the men fell and artistic depictions of the moment of their executions became widely circulated through underground printing presses.[58]

The bolstering of the leaders as martyrs gave a greater purpose to the Rising, transforming a military failure into a "triumph of defeat."[59] Bhreathneach-Lynch asserts,

> That event [the Rising] has exercised a profound influence on the shaping of modern, independent Ireland and in the consolidation of national identity. However, considered a failure initially, The Easter Rising quickly metamorphosed into a triumph. The dead acquired the status of national heroes, and the event assumed mythical and mystical significance. Written accounts published during the next half-century reinforced and sustained that construct. What ensued was what Friedrich Nietzsche described as monumental history: a history that is inspirational in outlook and gives positive images of historical figures, which allows the person of the present to know that the heroic deeds of the past can be reenacted in the future.[60]

In his recounting of events in 1949, Tom Barry concurred, stating, "Thus through the blood sacrifices of the men of 1916, had one Irish youth of eighteen been awakened to Irish Nationality," it was worth the sacrifice.[61] "These sacrifices were equally necessary to awaken the

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[57] Síghle Bhreathneach-Lynch, "Revisionism, the Rising, and Representation, " *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 3, no. 1 (1999): 88, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20646283.

[58] Ó Drisceoil, 59.

[59] Guy Beiner, "Between Trauma and Triumphalism: The Easter Rising, the Somme, and the Crux of Deep Memory in Modern Ireland", *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 2 (2007): 367, https://doi.org/10.1086/510892.

[60] Bhreathneach-Lynch, "Revisionism, the Rising, and Representation, 89.

[61] Guillemette, 45.

minds of ninety percent of the Irish people."[62] Guillemette expands on this further, "According to him: Easter Week caused 90 percent of the Irish people to be similarly awakened to the task at hand and soon triggered a national triumph after seven centuries of British oppression." [63]

The triumph primarily manifested into sentiments that were channeled into actions. As the Royal Irish Constabulary reported, "sympathy for the rebels has been strikingly shown by the readiness with which Nationalists are subscribing to collections in aid of the families of those imprisoned or shot for taking a leading part in the rebellion or who were deported. These collections show general sympathy with the rebels in places that were not expected and will strengthen the Sinn Feiners."[64] The majority of these collections were funneled into the Volunteer Dependents' Fund.

Kathleen Clarke (widow of Thomas) established the Volunteer Dependents' Fund (VDF) in May of 1916 with funds bestowed to her from her husband, originating from gold sent by Clan na Gael (the revolutionary arm for the Irish in America) for the Rising. [65] Dháibhéid notes,

> The committee was comprised primarily of the female relatives of the executed men of the Rising: among them Kathleen Clarke herself, Aine Ceannt, Mrs. Pearse, Muriel MacDonagh, Madge Daly (wife of Ned), and Lila Colbert (Sister of Con). The VDF played unashamedly on these connections to the dead rebels, emphasizing that their committee was 'acting as their dead husbands, sons, and brothers would desire.'[66]

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[62] Guillemette, 45.

[63] Guillemette, 45.

[64] Caoimhe nic Dháibhéid, "The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion, 1916-1918", *The Historical Journal,* no. 3 (2012): 712, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263270.

[65] Dháibhéid, "The Irish National Aid Association and the Radicalization of Public Opinion", 711.

[66] Dháibhéid, 711.

The VDF (later the INAAVDF) became a "significant contributor to the transformation of public opinion between 1916 and 1918" through the way they "channeled, coaxed, and marshaled sympathy for the executed men into a wider advanced nationalist project." [67] One strategy employed by the INAAVDF was creating and publishing ephemera, including memorial cards and handbills honoring the leaders (Figures 12-13). These often included an image on one side and notable quotes or final remarks on the other. The dissemination of these materials began covertly and passed surreptitiously to elude scrutiny from authorities, with the INAAVDF utilizing sympathetic printers and publishers willing to defy the censorship laws.

The Catholic Church then facilitated broader public distribution by featuring the memorial card images on chorus sheets and adding a religious narrative that enabled their publication in the *Catholic Bulletin* (Figures 14-15).[68] Shannon Furlong notes the efforts of the *Catholic Bulletin* in "publishing these pictures, selling nationalist flags, and selling pins supporting the executed was to elevate the public perception of these rebels to that of martyrs." [69]

The INAAVDF also collaborated with the Catholic Church to organize public events, such as memorial services, processions, and ceilis, that served as opportunities to distribute materials and promote the cause.[70] The INAAVDF established branches in several countries,

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[67] Dháibhéid, 728.

[68] Ó Drisceoil, 59.

[69] Sharon Furlong, "'Herstory' Recovered: Assessing the Contribution of Cumann Na MBan 1914-1923," The Past: The Organ of the Uí Cinsealaigh Historical Society, no. 30 (2009): 81, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44554533.

[70] Sharon Furlong, "'Herstory' Recovered: Assessing the Contribution of Cumann Na MBan 1914-1923,"81. Memorial songs were written for ceilis (Irish traditional dances) sponsored by the INAAVDF, where song sheets were distributed that featured an overtly nationalist tone in the depiction of 'Martyrs of Easter week' (Figures 16 & 17).

including America, Canada, and Australia, which helped widen the materials' distribution and increase support for the Irish cause.[71] Irish factions in America had long supported the establishment of an Irish Free State and sought to provide financial relief for the families of the participants of the Easter Rising.[72] Bazaars and commemorations were held as fundraisers, where handbills were circulated to raise awareness of the events of the rebellion and circumvent censorship in Ireland (Figures 16-17).[73]

The unity of the Gaelic tradition, Catholicism, and Nationalism created the foundation for *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week.* The sculpture beautifully reflects the connection of these three separate movements as the unifying concept to promote the notion of the executed leaders as martyrs in the aftermath of the Rising.

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[71] Furlong, "'Herstory' Recovered: Assessing the Contribution of Cumann Na MBan 1914-1923,"81.

[72] Clan na Gael (founded in 1867) and The Wolfe Tone Club (Founded in 1901) were American organizations dedicated to promoting Irish independence. Clan na Gael initially aimed and sponsored the use of force, including financially supporting the Irish Republican Brotherhood in its efforts to overthrow British rule. Both organizations worked to raise funds for the Irish independence movement, and members of Clan na Gael even participated in the negotiations that led to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, which established the Irish Free State.

[73] Augustine Birrell, chief secretary of Ireland from 1907-1916 sought to control the information received by "neutral countries" as he feared they would be given a "false impression as to the importance" of what transpired during the Easter Rising and its aftermath. Ó Drisceoil, 56.

Literature Review

The 1916 Easter Rising must be understood as a response to the ongoing legacy of British colonialism in Ireland. The Irish were treated very much as subordinate peoples and endowed with the same hostilities, tactics, and policies bestowed on official colonies of Britain. The Irish rebels and Fenians who took up arms for liberation against the British were often depicted as irrational, violent, and animalistic. With the arrival of Strongbow on Irish shores, "the evils of foreign rule" began and were not concluded until 1922 (although many do not consider this goal accomplished until all 32 counties are part of the Republic of Ireland). Twentieth-Century Ireland presents an intriguing study of postcolonialism at a time when the Irish were still under colonialism. The leaders of Ireland, who advocated for a return to their Gaelic heritage, were deeply aware of the loss of identity and attempts of forced homogeneity instilled in them by their overlords through processes of forced mimicry and hybridity. Irish nationalists witnessed the process of mimicry through what they deemed as "Anglicization." The longer Ireland was under the influence of England, the more Anglicized it became. As the Anglicization process advanced, the Irish increasingly struggled to connect with their heritage and, in many ways, had lost their sense of independent culture.

David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity* provides a framework for analyzing how colonialism shaped cultural production and representation. He argues that traditional postcolonial narratives are cast in the romantic genre, where heroic resistance is the norm.[74] Scott argues that the romanticization of postcolonial narratives often overshadows the complexities of

[74] David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) 7-11.

colonialism's impact on cultural production and representation. He argues that colonialism's influence extends beyond merely creating cultural artifacts and how they are represented and consumed. By exploring the cultural production of the colonized and the colonizers, Scott provides a nuanced perspective on the relationship between colonialism and cultural production, which moves beyond the romantic resistance narrative and into a more complex understanding of the interplay between power, representation, and cultural identity.

Applying this framework to the Irish visual arts created in response to the 1916 Easter Rising, it is evident that the Rising should be understood as a response to British colonialism and its legacy. The visual arts created in the aftermath of the Rising, including posters, illustrations, and murals, depict the martyred leaders of the Rising as heroic figures who fought for Irish independence. However, in contrast to a romanticized narrative of anti-colonial resistance, these visual arts also convey the tragic consequences of colonialism and its impact on Irish society. This approach, Scott argues, can offer a more nuanced and critical understanding of the challenges facing postcolonial societies.[75] In Ireland's case, it was the reconciliation of the great sacrifice made by the leaders against the economic struggles resulting from the near destruction of Dublin due to the Rising.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ireland exhibited a strong sense of progressivism that recognized the need to challenge all forms of oppression, including oppressive economic factors such as social class and gender, to achieve true independence. Many Irish citizens and the leadership of the 1916 Easter Rebellion embraced socialist views and believed in women's equality and empowerment. These views were reactionary to the current

[75] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, 7-11.

temperature and established the Irish people as more forward-thinking than their counterparts. This era proved to be a convergence of multiple factors that, when combined, resulted in a renewed appreciation for the contributions of the Gaelic people and asserted the people of Ireland as separate and independent people from their British overseers.

The core purpose of the Easter Rising and the Irish independence movement was focused primarily on restoring Gaelic culture as Irish history and the separatism of the Gaelic people from that of the Anglo-Saxons. Markéta Šonková asserts, "Ireland's successful declaration of political separation occurred after, rather than before, those assertions of cultural independence."[76]

While the events of the Easter Rising have been extensively studied, recent research has highlighted the significance of its aftermath in shaping Irish visual culture and national identity. Some analyses have even examined how the martyrdom of the leaders influenced support for the War of Irish Independence. However, the role of art and visual culture in promoting these narratives has been largely overlooked in scholarship. This literature review will address this gap by comprehensively examining the current knowledge on imagery surrounding the martyrdom of the executed Easter Rising Leaders and how these examinations can be applied to the analysis of Dora Sigerson Shorter's sculpture, *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week.*

[76] Markéta Šonková, "Public Sculpture and Nationalism: The Not-Only-Visual Re-Birth of Irish Identity | Re:Views Magazine," December 12, 2017, 3. https://reviewsmagazine.net/public-sculpture-and-nationalism-the-not-only-visual-re-birth-of-irish-identity/.

On Political Martyrdom

The word "martyr" comes from the Greek word "martys" which translates to "witness." Roxanne Euben argues that further examination of the root word for martyrdom suggests a sense of eternal permanence for the martyred as she notes that "martyrs often live on not only in the afterlife but in the recollection and remembrances of the community of the living."[77]

In early Christianity, the word denoted a religious devotion surpassing death, as a martyr was someone who willingly suffered death rather than renounced their faith. In the following centuries, the term underwent a semantic shift as the term became unrestrained from merely a religious context. In modernity, "martyr" refers to anyone who sacrifices their life for a cause or idealogy. [78] In a review of Erik Peterson's *Theology of Martyrdom*, Eduardo Schmidt Passos identifies that Peterson asserts "martyrdom is a public claim, not a private matter. It is a public affirmation of the truth, not a bourgeois indifference."[79] From a sociological perspective, political martyrdom has been studied concerning its efficacy in furthering social movements.

Tripp York examines this concept in his book "The Purple Crown: The Politics of Martyrdom." York argues that political martyrdom is a powerful tool for social movements because it can mobilize people and bring attention to a cause. He also argues that oppressed groups often use political martyrdom to resist their oppressors. York believes that martyrdom's roots in early Christianity strengthen the effects of martyrdom on society even when religious devotion is not readily apparent, as the moment of death unconsciously recalls for believers " the

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[77] Roxanne L. Euben, "Killing (For) Politics: Jihad, Martyrdom, and Political Action," *Political Theory* 30, no. 1 (2002): 18.

[78] Eduardo Schmidt Passos, "The Blood of the Martyrs: Erik Peterson's Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty," *The Review of Politics* 80, no. 3 (2018): 505.

[79] Passos, "The Blood of the Martyrs: Erik Peterson's Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty,"505.

moment in which all the world was simultaneously exposed as fallen and redeemed, of Christ's death and resurrection."[80]

Erik Peterson agrees when he argues that even if martyrdom is not explicitly religious, it is usually enhanced by religion or contains a divine aspect.[81] A similar enhanced effect was evident in the role of the Catholic Church, embracing the idea of the executed Irish leaders as political martyrs who were devout believers and divinely inspired to fight for a free Ireland. Peterson notes that this connection between the two strengthens the martyrdom practice's efficacy and inspires future movement followers. He asserts, "So, with one blow, the martyr reveals the powers that rule this world and bears witness to the superiority of a coming one."[82] Such association inherently ties the action of a political martyr as connected to religious devotion, even if the action's original intention was not religious.

The Impact of Martyrdom on Ireland Pre and Post 1916

Political martyrdom played a crucial role in the events leading up to and following the Easter Rising. While self-immolation can be traced back to the Brehon laws of pre-Norman Ireland, it was not until the deaths of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet that Irish political martyrdom achieved a level of prominence.[83] Several leaders of 1916 attributed their inspiration

[80] Tripp York and John D. Roth, *The Purple Crown: The Politics of Martyrdom*, Reprint edition (Wipf and Stock, 2020)19.

[81] Passos, "The Blood of the Martyrs: Erik Peterson's Theology of Martyrdom and Carl Schmitt's Political Theology of Sovereignty," 505-506.

[82] Passos, "The Blood of the Martyrs," 507.

[83] Seán Ó Cadhla, "'Then to Death Walked, Softly Smiling': Violence and Martyrdom in Modern Irish Republican Ballads," *Ethnomusicology* 61, no. 2 (2017): 265.

to the deaths of Tone and Emmet.[84] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of individuals and organizations, such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Fenian movement, were committed to violence to achieve Irish independence and readily accepted that this could cost them their lives.

In his study on death and dying in Ireland, Clodagh Tait identifies the dead as "useful symbols" due to their power and weakness.[85] Tait asserts their power exists in their ability to convey messages long after their time on earth, yet also identifies this as their greatest weakness. The message they are used to convey may transform into one they never intended.[86]

Seán Ó Cadhla, a scholar of ethnomusicology, examined the deep history of martyrdom in Ireland. He concluded that a "quasi-theological adherence to self-sacrifice" was "an elementary prerequisite of national liberation, an ideological construct most famously extolled by Patrick Pearse at the graveside of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in 1915."[87]

O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in 1915 was attended by over 100,000 people and heavily featured nationalist speeches. It would later be deemed the beginning of the Easter Rising, as it was considered a test of what the British would accept regarding large Fenian gatherings.[88]

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[84] Clodagh Tait, "Using and Abusing the Dying and the Dead in Early Modern Ireland," *History Ireland* 13, no. 1 (2005): 16.

[85] Tait, "Using and Abusing the Dying and the Dead in Early Modern Ireland," 16.

[86] Tait, 16.

[87] Ó Cadhla, "'Then to Death Walked, Softly Smiling': Violence and Martyrdom in Modern Irish Republican Ballads," 265.

[88] O'Brien, Eugene. "Visioning Ireland: Pearse, Prosopopoeia and the Remembering of O'Donovan Rossa and Tone." Nordic Irish Studies 13, no. 1 (2014): 17.

David Martin Doyle identifies that numerous examples of Irish political martyrs can be found in the years leading up to the Rising as well as long after. He cites the names of Robert Emmet, Michael Larkin, and Roger Casement. (Casement's execution was especially controversial as he was sentenced to death by hanging and thus became the only one of the Rising leaders not to be granted a "solider's execution" via firing squad) and Kevin Barry as examples.[89] Stuart Banner asserts that sentencing a political prisoner to death can lead to martyrdom, effectively stoking an already burning flame. Doyle applies Banner's arguments to the example of Kevin Barry. Doyle asserts, "had he been imprisoned… no one would have remembered him [Barry] a year later…but because of his death sentence, Barry dangled in public memory far longer than he lived on earth."[90]

Ó Cadhla asserts that after the 1916 Easter Rising, martyrdom became "deeply calcified" in the Republican belief system.[91] He notes that the execution of the leaders had "all the sacrificial significance of High Mass…thus forever cementing the role of the sacrificial martyr within the physical force tradition."[92] Such reactions became a cautionary tale for the British regarding how to proceed with future punishments.

Doyle references a chancellor of the exchequer, John Simon, who wrote of the "historical irony that the executions in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising had transformed Irish public opinion and engendered sympathy for the rebel cause that they had been administered to undermine…The dead rebels became 'martyrs and national heroes,' and the ghosts of 1916

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[89] David Matthew Doyle, "Republicans, Martyrology, and the Death Penalty in Britain and Ireland, 1939–1990," *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 3 (2015): 704

[90] Doyle, "Republicans, Martyrology, and the Death Penalty in Britain and Ireland, 1939–1990, 703."

[91] Ó Cadhla, 264.

[92] Ó Cadhla, 264.

movingly and lastingly haunted political Ireland."[93] Patrick Bishop and Eamon Mallie referred to this sensation as "the perverse psyche of Republicanism," which allowed the Irish people to "turn disaster into an emotional triumph."[94]

Martyrdom and Collective Memory

Exceedingly little has been written on Sigerson Shorter's monument, *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*. Of the existing resources, many are limited to briefly mentioning her work in only a line or two. As a result, resources regarding the use of sculpture as a political expression in Ireland have been included, and the mentions of Sigerson Shorter's sculpture.

In her study on historical heroic sculptures, Nuala C. Johnson asserts that the renewed interest in sculptural monuments over the late 19th and early 20th centuries was rooted in a "glorification of the national past" intended to "articulate and legitimize present-day political circumstances or future aspirations."[95] She further asserts that creating political monuments was not merely decorative but "represents the self-conscious attempts to solicit public participation in the day's politics."[96] Johnson believes the profound significance of such sculptures lies in their "popular appeal" and the "debates that surrounded their construction and unveiling." Johnson ascertains "statues celebrating Ireland's attempt to achieve some measure of political independence from Britain." As a result, Johnson argues that sculptures from this period must be

[93] Doyle, 709.

[94] Ó Cadhla, 264.

[95] Nuala C. Johnson, "Sculpting Heroic Histories: Celebrating the Centenary of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 19, no. 1 (1994): 79, https://doi.org/10.2307/622447.

[96] Johnson, "Sculpting Heroic Histories: Celebrating the Centenary of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland," 78.

considered “as a part of the material and ideological fabric of late nineteenth-century Irish Nationalism.”[97]

Dr. John Turpin agrees with the assertion, noting, “commemorative statues in public squares were often an idealized celebration of national heroes and of central canonical events in a grand romantic, historical narrative, whose ultimate if unstated, purpose was present-day political self-determination.”[98] Nationalistic artwork of the era generally depicted either allegorical representations or depictions of “individual heroes.”[99]

Precedents in Irish Nationalistic Art

Oliver Sheppard, a prominent artist in the early 20th century, was renowned for his unique style, which blended classical aesthetics with his fervor for portraying "Irish legendary themes." [100] A cursory analysis of his artistic oeuvre facilitates an evaluation of how nationalist motifs were portrayed in Irish visual culture during that period. Oliver Sheppard adhered to the conventional Irish approach to nationalistic art of the period, primarily portraying allegorical figures or celebrated individuals in his works. Thus, the art of Sheppard’s early years reflects the overall movement of the time and the increased social push to return to a place of appreciation of Gaelic heritage.

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[97] Johnson,79.

[98] John Turpin, “Oliver Sheppard’s 1798 Memorials,” *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, 1990, 72, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20492627.

[99] John Turpin, “Oliver Sheppard’s 1798 Memorials,” 73.

[100] Turpin, “The Life of Oliver Sheppard, Dublin Sculptor, 1865 - 1941: Part 1,”68.

Murphy observes that Sheppard's early works were predominantly completed without a commission, giving Sheppard the freedom to concentrate on Celtic mythology and reflect his great pride in his cultural heritage.[101] While Sheppard was not an active participant in the Rising himself, he unquestionably followed the nationalistic ideology of the time. He stated his views, "My politics are simple. I have always thought that this country should be free."[102] Sheppard was also outspoken regarding the subjects of new statues around Ireland, asserting that they should depict Ireland's rich Gaelic history.[103]

His devotion to Irish historical and cultural representation and nationalistic views earned him several commissions for public art depicting nationalistic subjects. These commissions established his prominence as a nationalist sculptor in the early twentieth century.[104] In particular, one created in plaster in 1911, depicting the death of Cúchulainn, would later be chosen by 1916 Irish Rebel and Irish President Eamon de Valera to be cast in bronze and placed in the General Post Office as a memorial for those who fought in the Rising[105].

Oliver Sheppard's artworks provide valuable insight into the portrayal of nationalistic themes in early twentieth-century Irish visual culture. Sheppard and Sigerson Shorter shared a similar adherence to the traditional Irish style of nationalistic art in their passion for depicting Irish legends and promoting the depiction of Ireland's Gaelic history in public art.

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[101] Paula Murphy. "1916 Centenary: Warriors and Statesmen," *Irish Arts Review* 33, no. 1 (2016): 114.

[102] John Turpin, "The Life of Oliver Sheppard, Dublin Sculptor, 1865 - 1941: Part 2," 143.

[103] John Turpin, "The Life of Oliver Sheppard, Dublin Sculptor, 1865 - 1941: Part 2,"145.

[104] Turpin, "The Life of Oliver Sheppard, Dublin Sculptor, 1865 - 1941: Part 1,"73.

[105] Turpin,"Art & Society: Cúchulainn Lives On,"27.

A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week

Ray Bateson agrees that it is within this nationalistic context that we must examine *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week,* more colloquially known as the *Sigerson Memorial*, a name Bateson feels Sigerson Shorter would have disapproved. Bateson explains that while the memorial was paid for and designed by Sigerson Shorter, it was never meant to serve as a memorial for her but rather for the victims of the Easter Rising.[106] Bridget Lawlor supports this assertion, stating that Sigerson Shorter envisioned the sculpture erected over the undecorated and unmarked graves of the "*Sixteen Dead Men* mourned by her in one of her poems" to serve as their memorial markers.[107] Shorter intended to use the funds from her collected works within the *Tricolour* to fund the monument.

While there has been a significant amount of scholarship on the Easter Rising and its leaders, little attention has been paid to the role that art and visual culture played in advancing the political narratives of the time. This literature review highlights the importance of considering sculpture as a political expression, particularly in the context of late nineteenth-century Irish nationalism. Dora Sigerson Shorter's sculpture *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*, is a significant example. Further research is needed to understand its historical and cultural significance fully. Thus this work hopes to add some context to the sculpture and how its perception was intended to be perceived.

[106] Bateson, "The Dead of the Easter Rising 2016," 217.

[107] Bridget F. Lawlor, "Dora Sigerson Shorter. An Appreciation," The Irish Monthly 48, no. 560 (1920): 101, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20505461.

Exploring Symbolism, Nationalism, and Female Representation in Sigerson Shorter's *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*

(Analysis)

Location of the Sculptures

To consider the efficacy of sculptures in disseminating their intended message, one must first consider the location of the sculpture and its accessibility to its audience. Judith Hill asserts that the location of a monument is the most substantial "signifier of political allegiance."[108] According to Šonková, sculptures with a clear message and frequented locations would allow the viewers to increasingly "realize the importance of their national pride and identity."[109]

Previous analysis has determined that the art of an era will often express the political ideology of a time and thus represent the overall mood of the period in which it was created.[110] Therefore the progression of Irish thought can be deciphered by tracing the subject depiction across public sculptures of the mid-19th century through the early twentieth century. Šonková identifies the significance of this shift when she writes, "The evolution of public monument in Ireland is of a particular interest, as it managed to reflect – within a mere one hundred years – so radical a shift." [111] It is under this consideration that nationalist works in Ireland must be considered. As Ireland sought to proclaim its independence, the nationalist public monuments of the era often created a link between the nation's historically Gaelic roots and a romanticized

[108] Šonková, "Public Sculpture and Nationalism: The Not-Only-Visual Re-Birth of Irish Identity", 5.

[109] Šonková, 7.

[110] Šonková, 3.

[111] Šonková, 3.

version of the cost of independence.[112] The primary work addressed in this paper serves as evidence of this assertion as it represents an ideal nationalistic approach and recalls the Gaelic traditions and ornamentation of Irish heritage.

Sigerson Shorter's work, *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week,* was completed in 1927 and is located in Glasnevin Cemetery, a site that would allow for the broadest audience possible. Cemeteries across Europe were popular destinations where people of all classes would journey to take in the scenic gardens and show their remembrance of departed loved ones by lovingly cleaning and tending to their graves.[113]

The Irish approach to remembrance is rooted in traditional Celtic practices. Most notable among these is the core Druidism belief regarding the connection of the world of the living and the world of the dead, which suggested the two worlds would intermix, and thus continual commemoration was essential. Just as the ancient Irish burial site, the Hill of Tara was a critical heritage site, the cemetery became its modern counterpart, where people come to pay their respects to their loved ones and appreciate Ireland's history and culture.[114] In this way, the placement of the Sigerson Shorter monument in Glasnevin Cemetery, a site of great historical

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[112] Šonková, 5.

[113] Michelle Facos, ed., "Sculpture and the Public Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Site-Specific Art of the Cemetery, the Garden, and the Street," in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Art* (John Wiley & Sons, 2018) 3.

[114] Nina Witoszek, "Ireland: A Funerary Culture?," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 76, no. 302 (1987): 211, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30090860. The Hill of Tara was a sacred site in Irish mythology and history, believed to be the seat of the High Kings of Ireland. It was also a critical tribal burial site, where important figures were interred with significant ritual and ceremony.Similarly, Glasnevin Cemetery is one of the largest cemeteries in Ireland and is known for being the final resting place of many prominent Irish figures, including political leaders, artists, and writers.

and cultural significance in Irish history, reinforces this connection to the land and the idea of a shared cultural heritage.[115]

Through their historical and cultural significance, cemeteries became sites of nationalism and allowed for expressions of unity. [116] A chief example of this politicization is evident in the fact that Glasnevin Cemetery was effectively the site of the start of the Easter Rising. The October 1915 burial of the Fenian leader O'Donovan Rossa served as a "dry-run" for the military parade and organization that would culminate in revolution a mere six months later.

Further consideration as to the specific location of the Sigerson Shorter sculpture should also be noted. Placing the Sigerson Shorter sculpture at the front of Glasnevin Cemetery, just across from the revered "Republican Plot," was a strategic decision that ensured the monument would be impossible to ignore. The "Republican Plot" is a section of the cemetery where the bodies of many respected Fenian leaders, including O'Donovan Rossa, were laid to rest. This section of the cemetery holds significant historical and cultural importance as it represents the final resting place of those who fought for Irish independence. The Sigerson Shorter sculpture, positioned directly across from the Republican plot, symbolizes the sacrifices made by those who fought for Irish independence and their enduring legacy. As visitors entered and exited the cemetery, they would be confronted with the sculpture, and the significance of the sacrifices made by the 1916 leaders would be thrust into their consciousness. This placement ensured that

[115] Witoszek, "Ireland: A Funerary Culture?," 210. Ancient Irish did not believe there was a hard delineation between the living world and the dead. The ancient Irish also had a strong belief in the afterlife and believed that the spirits of the dead continued to exist in the world beyond. As a result, they would often leave offerings and gifts at burial sites or other important locations, as a way of showing respect and honoring the dead.

[116] Witoszek, 211.

passers-by would consider the sacrifices of the leaders as they came and went, and it would serve as a constant reminder of the struggle for Irish independence.

As mourning at the cemetery was a rite of passage in Ireland, families often came each Sunday to visit their departed loved ones. Walking by this monument immediately after entering the cemetery allowed for the continual remembrance of the leaders and their sacrifice by the older and younger generations. The forced engagement with the piece creates a renewed sense of ownership through connection. The memories of the fallen rebels become inexorably intertwined with those of the mourners' own loved ones as they visit the cemetery to pay their respects, even as new generations who may not have been involved in its creation continue to visit and contribute to its upkeep. Those who purchased Sigerson Shorter's work, *The Tricolour,* may have also felt an additional sense of ownership as the monument was created with the funds from purchasing the book.

The Symbolism in *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*

The placement of the dying hero at the center of the monument is also symbolic, as it suggests the central role that the rebels played in the struggle for Irish independence and ensures that the sacrifice of the fallen Volunteer achieves the attention Sigerson Shorter believes it deserves. According to Dora Sigerson Shorter, the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising demonstrated profound personal dedication and bravery through their actions. She emphasized that the Irish people needed to treat the sacrifice of the leaders with solemnity, reverence, and respect by continually pursuing Irish independence and self-determination in their honor. Sigerson Shorter advocated for remembering the fallen in a way that acknowledges their unique humanity and contributions to the broader struggle for Irish independence.

The soldier and Mother Ireland figures are situated within an ashlar limestone pergola. Sigerson Shorter's use of Ashlar limestone in creating sculptures and monuments was notable due to its historical use in constructing significant buildings and monuments in Ireland. The use of this material allowed for a sense of continuity and connection to the past, as artists and architects could build upon this tradition and create aesthetically pleasing and culturally significant works. Furthermore, the use of Ashlar limestone allowed for unquestionable durability and longevity in the sculptures, ensuring that they would stand the test of time and continue to serve as reminders of Ireland's rich cultural heritage for generations to come.

The four pillars of the pergola strengthen the overall work and allude to the pillars of Irish identity: culture, history, language, and landscape. The tops of the columns and entablature of the pergola are carved with symbols and designs to represent Ireland's rich cultural and historical heritage, such as the Celtic knotwork and a large Celtic cross. The Celtic knots have no beginning and end, representing continuity, interconnectedness, and the enduring nature of the human spirit. With the emergence of the Christian Celtic School, interlocking knots also signify the connection between ancient Gaelic tradition and Christianity.[117] These symbols tell a narrative of Ireland as an independent country with a rich and storied heritage.

On the west side of the pergola is a plaque inscribed with English and Irish translations of Sigerson Shorter's poem "The Sacred Fire," one of her most famous works. Including the poem on the monument is a significant addition that reinforces the theme of grief and loss that permeates the artwork. "The Sacred Fire" is one of her most famous works inscribed in English

[117] R. A. S. Macalister, "Celtic Ireland," *The Irish Monthly* 47, no. 554 (1919): 416, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20505165.

and Irish, ensuring visitors from different backgrounds and linguistic abilities can appreciate its message.

The poem is deeply emotional, dealing with the pain and sadness of loss but also contains a powerful message of hope. The idea that a person's spirit and memory can persist even after their physical body has passed away is a common theme in many cultures and religions. It is a message that is especially poignant in the context of the Easter Rising and its aftermath. Thus, its inclusion on the monument reflects the profound sadness and mourning felt by Sigerson Shorter and many others at the initial failure of the Easter Rising and the tremendous loss of life that resulted. The inclusion of the poem on the monument is not only a reflection of the profound sadness and mourning felt by Sigerson Shorter and others, but it also underscores a broader trend in European art during the early 20th century.

Irish Art in the Early Twentieth Century

Italian art, particularly the Renaissance tradition, replaced French art in popularity to greatly influence modern European art development.[118] Like in many other parts of Europe, artists in Ireland were drawn to the beauty and skill of Italian art and were inspired by its use of classical forms and themes. However, it was not merely the global shift that drove Ireland towards Italian styles; Ireland's preference was principally founded on political and cultural factors. Italy had long been considered the center of European culture and civilization. For Irish artists striving to create a unique national identity, embracing Italian art functioned as a way to assert their own cultural heritage and break away from the dominant influence of France.

[118] Nicola Gordon Bowe, "Symbolism in Turn-of-the-Century Irish Art," *The GPA Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, 1989, 137.

According to Cyril Barrett, French modernism was not readily "accessible" in Ireland, as "modernist art was rejected by the nationalist element." [119] This rejection was grounded in France's approach to religion over the preceding centuries. As a part of the French Revolution, France turned away from Catholicism to create a new "enlightened" religion. Catholicism was a core aspect of Irish national identity, and some conservative Irish Catholics saw French styles as threatening traditional religious values. The rise of Impressionism stoked these fears to a new level. Impressionism was viewed as a threat to traditional religious values in Ireland primarily because of its focus on the fleeting moment and the transitory nature of experience. Such a view starkly contrasted with the Irish Catholic Church's position on the importance of eternity and the afterlife. Thus the church saw the Impressionist style as undermining these values by emphasizing the present moment and the beauty of the natural world instead of seeking the beauty of the eternal heaven. In line with these concerns, Impressionists were often associated with a more liberal, secular worldview that conservative Catholics feared would lead to a decline in moral values.

Sigerson Shorter's depiction of her sculpture as a direct reference to Michelangelo's *La Pietá* aligns with the Irish nationalist desire of the time, which sought to reinforce Irish Catholic identity by returning to conservative religious values represented by the Italian Renaissance. However, her styling represents a modern tone, combining Renaissance elements and themes with those associated with Baroque art. The sculpture's Baroque styling is characterized by its dramatic and emotional intensity, strong contrasts of light and shadows, and emphasis on highly detailed and intricate forms. The monument is also notable for its use of allegorical figures, a common feature of Baroque art. The figure of Ireland is depicted in a mourning pose, with her

[119] Barrett, 238.

head bowed and her arms outstretched in grief. Shorter's incorporation of allegory and symbolism in the monument reflects her interest in reviving and adapting historical styles while maintaining a modern approach.

Religious Connection

Ireland's steadfast attachment to Catholicism was a calculated effort to maintain a sense of independence and otherness from its captors. As Catholicism was considered a central principle of "Irishness," these sculptures must reflect a religious tone.

In examining the religious aspects of Sigerson Shorter's work, one must also consider her approach to the legacy of the figures through the character's perceived resurrection narratives. While the resurrection of Jesus Christ is meant to be interpreted literally, the resurrection of Patrick Pearse or the fallen volunteers is intended figuratively.

For Sigerson Shorter's work, this figurative resurrection occurs through the belief that the fallen Irish rebels will rise again in future generations as the younger citizens become inspired and take up the arms of the fallen. The presence of the cross on the pergola directly above Sigerson's sculptures is an overtly Christian symbol, representing the crucifixion of Christ and thus connecting the sacrifice of the Easter Rising leaders to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The depiction of the executed Easter Rising leaders as martyrs began within hours of their deaths, as tales of their last moments were whispered amongst the populace. These descriptions were further stoked in the months after with works like the ballad of Thomas Ashe. Ashe was imprisoned at Frongoch, England, for his participation in the Rising. While there, he wrote a ballad entitled "Let Me Carry Your Cross for Ireland, Lord!" The ballad reinforced commonly held nationalist ideas suggesting "sacrificial endurance" must precede a "national

regeneration."[120] Ashe's work creates a "hybridity of religious and political imagery" that equates the "Irish struggle to that of the Crucifixion" and furthers an existing artistic precedent for the unification of Irish culture, politics, and religion as an argument supporting Irish independence.[121] The elevation of the Irish struggle to that of Jesus's Crucifixion was a popular strategy throughout the Republican ballad tradition.[122] O' Cadhla reasons that such a technique "attempts to realign the prevailing power dynamic within the British/Irish colonial relationship. In death, the Republican martyr triumphs by morally overpowering a markedly stronger opponent, thereby neutralizing its vastly superior military strength…whereby resounding defeat is reconstructed as a victory.[123]Ashe's ballad expands on this idea by describing the "cause of Róisín Dubh" as a cross all Irishmen must carry to facilitate a "national resurrection."[124] James Stephens opens his book on the Rising and its connection to Catholicism by saying, "The day before the Rising was Easter Sunday, and they were crying in the Churches 'Christ has risen.' The following day, in the streets, they cried, 'Ireland has risen."[125]

This unification approach was replicated in Sigerson Shorter's work, as the duality of figures as religious icons and Irish heroes made them more effective as sources of inspiration. By depicting them in the medium of sculpture, the artists ensured their work would be easily viewable for the masses and thus would have a more significant impact. As Caterina Pierre

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[120] Ó Cadhla, 270.

[121] Ó Cadhla, 270.

[122] Ó Cadhla, 270.

[123] Ó Cadhla, 280.

[124] Ó Cadhla, 270.

[125] Augustine Martin, "To Make a Right Rose Tree: Reflections on the Poetry of 1916 on JSTOR," accessed January 23, 2023, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30088629.

notes, “The point of nineteenth-century public sculpture depicting heroic figures ‘was to inspire the young to emulate their deeds and, quite literally, give them something to look up to.’” [126]

Exploring Nationalism in Sigerson Shorter's Sculpture

Sigerson Shorter designed the memorial’s centerpiece as a nationalistic version of Michelangelo’s *La Pietá* (Figure 18), which depicts the broken body of Jesus Christ strewn across his mother Mary’s lap. Sigerson Shorter was likely exposed to Michelangelo’s work through art exhibitions, books, and other publications that featured Renaissance art, as these materials were widely available in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, it is likely that Sigerson Shorter encountered works inspired and reflective of Michelangelo’s *La Pietá,* such as works by Irish artist John Hogan (1800-1858), who created three versions of such a work.[127] The most notable is his sculpture *The Dead Christ* (Figure 19) from 1829, on display in Saint Theresa’s Carmelite Church, Dublin, a mere three kilometers from Sigerson Shorter’s childhood home. It is also worthy of mention that as one of Dublin’s oldest Catholic churches, Saint Theresa’s, holds religious and social importance and would have been visited for special occasions by other Catholic parish members, such as Saint Theresa of Avila’s feast day.[128]

Sigerson Shorter, raised in a nationalistic literary family, would have been aware of the repurposing of religious messianic imagery for nationalistic purposes. This allusion was common among Irish nationalists in the 19th and early 20th centuries, as they sought to create a sense of

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[126] 14. Caterina Y. Pierre, “Sculpture and the Public Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Site-Specific Art of the Cemetery, the Garden, and the Street” in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Art* , ed. Michelle Facos, (John Wiley & Sons, 2018) 227.

[127] Maura Prunty, “John Hogan: Greatest of Irish Sculptors,” *The Irish Monthly* 78, no. 919 (1950): 41–43.

[128] FUSIO, “St. Theresa’s Carmelite Church, Clarendon Street, Johnson’s Court, Dublin 2, DUBLIN,” Buildings of Ireland, accessed April 25, 2023, https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/50910134/st-theresas-carmelite-church-clarendon-street-johnsons-court-dublin-2-dublin.

unity and shared identity among the Irish people. Nationalist poets such as Thomas Davis often used religious imagery to evoke grief, mourning, and hope, as evidenced by his poem *The Lament for Owen Roe*. The poem describes the death of Owen Roe O'Neill, an Irish military leader, and the grief felt by the Irish people at his loss. In the poem, Davis references Michelangelo's *La Pietá* as a symbol of the grief and mourning felt by the Irish people:

> And who are these that bend above him,
> In solemn silence, kneeling low,
> With eyes that speak the anguish of him,
> Like Mary o'er her dead Pieta?

This image of Mary cradling the body of her dead son, Jesus, was a powerful symbol of grief and loss in Catholicism, and Davis used it to evoke similar emotions in his readers. As a writer and poet, Sigerson Shorter was likely familiar with Davis's work and his use of religious imagery for nationalistic purposes. His work may have inspired her when writing her poetry featuring religious imagery.

Michelangelo's rendition of *La Pietá* portrays Mary with a melancholic and mournful expression, referencing the profound sacrifice of her son and the resulting salvation it offers humanity. This portrayal highlights deep maternal love and intense grief. In contrast, Sigerson Shorter's sculpture portrays a different message. Instead of depicting Mary, Shorter's sculpture features an embodiment of Mother Ireland, with the body of an Irish rebel in her arms. This substitution of religious imagery with a nationalistic message is significant as it highlights the connection between the Irish nationalist movement and the Catholic faith, which has long been a part of Irish culture. By replacing the figure of Mary with a representation of Mother Ireland,

Shorter's sculpture invokes a sense of national pride and sacrifice. The figure of the Irish rebel, cradled in the arms of the mother, reinforces the idea of martyrdom and sacrifice in the name of Irish independence. In this way, the sculpture becomes a work of art and a political statement by embodying the fervent nationalism sweeping through Ireland at the time and serving as a potent symbol of the sacrifice and devotion of the Irish people to their cause.

The styling of the figure's uniform identifies the figure as an Irish Volunteer, which underscores the sculpture's political statement and artistic value by connecting it to the Irish Republican Army, one of the several factions involved in the rebellion. As a result of the unification of several divisions, the uniforms of the rebels during the Easter Rising were widely improvised, often combining British Army Surplus items with civilian attire.[129] Sigerson Shorter has adorned the body of the Irish Volunteer in this style. He wears pants that appear slightly too big for his frame, cinched tightly at his waist with a Sam Browne belt.[130] The socks and shoes he wears appear civilian rather than military grade. The non-conformity of the uniforms reflects the station and the "unofficial" status of the Volunteers. Despite their limited financial means, all were willing to risk their lives for a free Ireland.

It is worth noting that the soldier portrayed in the sculpture is depicted without a shirt or jacket, a nod to the classical heroic nude. Historically, Irish culture tends to be more conservative and modest regarding nudity and depictions of the human form in art; therefore, Sigerson Shorter has modified the image to align with modern Irish sensibilities by abstaining from a fully nude

[129] "Irish Volunteers History and Uniforms Etc | The Irish War," accessed March 25, 2023, https://www.theirishwar.com/category/irish-volunteers-history-and-uniforms-etc/.

[130] Lorcan Collins, *1916: The Rising Handbook*, (The O'Brien Press, 2016) 63.

representation. The addition of the clothing on the lower half of the soldier's body also allows for the identification of the soldier as a member of the Irish resistance.

The most apparent indication of the figure's identity is found in the face of the soldier, which bears a marked resemblance to Patrick Pearse (Figure 20). Pearse preferred to be depicted from the side as he was self-conscious of an eye abnormality.[131] Thus, Sigerson Shorter complies with this preference by only showing him in a profile view. The use of a profile view also allows for the face of Pearse to be facing upward to Mother Ireland, signifying his devotion to his country. His face evokes a sense of peace as he now believes he has accomplished his purpose as a martyr for Ireland.

Identifying the soldier as Patrick Pearse allows a distinct contrast between Sigerson Shorter's A Monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week, and Michelangelo's *La Pietá* 's through the depiction of the human form. In *La Pietá*, Jesus is depicted as an emaciated, long-suffering figure. In contrast, in *A Monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*, Pearse is depicted as a muscular and able-bodied figure, representing strength, resilience, and heroism closely associated with the nationalist cause. This contrast underscores the difference in emphasis between the two sculptures: Michelangelo's sculpture highlights the sacrifice and suffering of Christ. In contrast, Sigerson Shorter's sculpture celebrates the heroic sacrifice of Pearse and his comrades for the nationalist cause.

This representation of Pearse as a modernized heroic nude is significant because it departs from the traditional portrayal of Irish figures in art, which tended to emphasize restraint and humility. This break from tradition signals the emergence of a new sense of national pride

[131] Brian Crowley, *Patrick Pearse: A Life in Pictures*, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2013), 63.

and self-confidence in Ireland. The emphasis on Pearse's physical strength and muscularity is a potent symbol of the Irish people's resistance and determination in the face of oppression. By depicting Pearse as a muscular and able-bodied figure, Sigerson Shorter emphasizes the Irish people's strength, resilience, and willingness to fight for their freedom and independence.

Additionally noteworthy is the positioning of his body in contrast to that of Jesus'pose in *La Pietá.* The body of Jesus is broken and falls across Mary's lap. Pearse's body, however, is mainly upright, supported by Mother Ireland. He leans into her embrace as the two lock fingers intimately. This gesture signifies Pearse's devotion to Ireland as his only love, having never married. As Pearse sacrificed his life for Ireland, Mother Ireland supported him, giving him the strength to do so. Sigerson Shorter's work presents an overt representation of the association of Ireland's freedom as bearing a more divine purpose.

Styling in Features, Clothing, and Composition

A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week, represents the common assertion after the Rising that "death compensated for failure in life" [132] The resounding influence of this sculpture is a credit to its rich symbolism, which conveys the emotional and mythological resonance of its narratives.

Apart from the obvious resemblance to Pearse, the soldier bears several other clues that affirm his identity. Further evidence that the soldier is intended as a direct reference to Pearse is found at his feet, where a scroll lies curled at the bottom right corner of the sculpture as if it has just fallen from his hands. The scroll symbolizes the Proclamation of the Republic, read by

[132] Seán Ó Cadhla, "'Then to Death Walked, Softly Smiling': Violence and Martyrdom in Modern Irish Republican Ballads," *Ethnomusicology* 61, no. 2 (2017): 265, https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.61.2.0262.

Pearse at the start of the Easter Rising. Pearse's wearing of the Sam Browne belt indicates his rank as a Commandant within the Irish Republican Army.[133] Another note of interest, but far less obvious, is the figure's footwear. As the Irish Republican Army consisted of several sub-units (The Irish Citizen's Army, Fianna Na Héireann, Irish Volunteers.), none officially recognized regiments; the men received no funding for uniforms. Therefore many depictions and accounts of the "Volunteer's uniforms" note a great deal of variance across the pieces.[134] It was not uncommon for these uniforms to be assembled in fragments. Patrick Pearse was known for combining civilian clothes with assorted military wear, so much so that images of Pearse's make-shift uniform have become iconically associated with the 1916 Volunteers. He often favored wearing dress socks and shoes instead of heavier boots.[135]

The positioning of the figures in Sigerson Shorter's *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week,* is reminiscent of Michelangelo's *La Pietá.* This positioning serves to symbolically cast Pearse as a messianic figure whose death would lead to the ultimate victory of an independent Ireland. Sigerson Shorter's version of Mother Ireland directly merges the two traditional female depictions of Ireland who, despite witnessing her loved one's martyrdom, "gain solace from the knowledge that his death will alleviate the suffering of others."[136]

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[133] Lorcan Collins, 63.

[134] Lorcan Collins, 63.

[135] Ken Finlay, "Inside the GPO 1916: The Eye-Witness Accounts," Dublin Historical Record 69, no. 2 (2016): 180. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44984382.

[136] Ó Cadhla, "'Then to Death Walked, Softly Smiling': Violence and Martyrdom in Modern Irish Republican Ballads," 270.

Portrayals of the spirit or essence of Ireland have traditionally depicted the country as a female figure, or more commonly as "Mother Ireland," a mother figure who has endured centuries of oppression and hardship yet remains resilient. Mother Ireland symbolizes the connection between the Irish people and their land. As a nurturing and protective force, she is responsible for watching over and guiding her children in their struggle for freedom.

Before the Easter Rising, it was common for Mother Ireland to be depicted in the style of Cathleen ni Houlihan, a fictionalized version of Ireland that serves as a personification of the Irish people and their history of oppression by foreign powers from a play by W.B. Yeats. The most well-known depiction of Cathleen ni Houlihan is Beatrice Elvery's painting *Eire* from 1907 (Figure 21), which she was inspired to create after seeing actress Maude Gonne in the title role of Yeat's play. The play's message insinuates that the Irish people should be willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause of Irish independence, just as Cathleen ni Houlihan sacrifices her own family for the sake of her country. The narrative of the play influenced the styling of this mother Ireland figure. She is serene and graciously resigned to the sacrifice she must make for the advancement of her country. In *Eire*, Ireland, is seated before a Celtic cross, wearing a draped white gown and a green hooded cloak. She is solemn and knowing as she tilts her head toward the infant child in her lap, allegorically depicting a "young Ireland" or the future generations of Ireland. The child stretches his arm out, emphasizing his focus on the future that lies before him. Tucked into the hem of her cloak and filling the background, Mother Ireland is surrounded by a "ghostly crowd of martyrs, patriots, saints, and scholars." [137]

[137] Nicola Gordon Bowe, "The Art of Beatrice Elvery, Lady Glenavy (1883-1970)," *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 11 (1995): 171, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20492831.

Lady Ireland in *Eire* appears peaceful and introspective, giving the work a more tranquil and contemplative mood than representations in the style of *Róisín Dubh (Dark Rosaleen)*. Oliver Sheppard and William Pearse (brother to Patrick) have both been separately credited with sculpting the *Róisín Dubh*(located under the bust of Mangan in Stephens Green, Dublin, IE)(Figure 22). [138] In this representation, Ireland is shown as a mature and aged figure who has completed the sacrifice and now bears the deep sorrow of loss.[139] A sixteenth/seventeenth-century lyrical poem about the Irish folklore heroine Roisin Dubh inspires the artwork. The Róisín Dubh was the beloved of an Irish chieftain. She was taken captive by the English and died in captivity. The Róisín Dubh became a symbol of the lamentation of the loss of Irish freedom and independence and the suffering of the Irish under English rule.

As a result, the *Róisín Dubh* version of Lady Ireland has a more mournful and defiant tone, meant to embody the history of Irish oppression and the weighty cost of resistance. Depiction of *Róisín Dubh* traditionally also includes references to traditional Irish music and folklore, underscoring the country's steadfast resilience to reclaim its identity and heritage. This is referenced in *Róisín Dubh* through the subtle carvings of women in Róisín's hair on either side of her face (Figure 23). These women whisper into Róisín's ear, encouraging and reassuring her. Turpin suggests Elvery's earlier sculpture, Glendalough, may have inspired these tiny figures representing the ethereal nature of ancient Ireland. [140] William's brother, Patrick, wrote of the

[138] *James Clarence Mangan Bust*, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, 1909. https://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000049493. Sheppard is known to have completed the brinze bust of Mangan, but the identify of the artist behind the Róisín Dubh figure below the bust is still debated among Irish Art Historians. Historians believe it was either carved by William Pearse or Oliver Sheppard. No concrete conclusion has been reached.

[140] Melissa Bowen, "Nationalism, Motherhood, and Activism: The Life and Works of Beatrice Elvery, 1881-1920," n.d., https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/concern/theses/nz8063070?locale=en.

sculpture in his Irish language publication *An Claidheamh Soluis* after her debut at the Royal Hibernian Academy, describing her as " an expression of the soul of Ireland if ever the soul of Ireland had been expressed in art." [141]

Sigerson Shorter draws inspiration for her Mother Ireland from the Roisín Dubh version of Mother Ireland and Cathleen Ni Houlihan. The Roisín Dubh version of Mother Ireland is often depicted as an older woman with a more maternal appearance, much like the Mother Ireland figure in *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week.* Once a young woman in her youthful prime, she is now older and wearier. The softness of a mother's face has replaced the youth's sharp angles. Sigerson Shorter adopts this version of Mother Ireland to endorse the sacrifice made by Pearse and the other fallen volunteers as necessary, ultimately leading to victory through their deaths.

The maternal appearance of the figure allows Sigerson Shorter to allude to the stoic grief experienced by Mrs. Pearse over the loss of her two sons. As the mother of Patrick and Willie Pearse, Mrs. Pearse became a symbol of the resilience and sacrifice of the Irish people in the face of British oppression. Her resigned response to the loss of her sons and her commitment to the nationalist cause earned her the nickname "Mother Ireland."[142] In this sense, Mrs. Pearse embodied the ideal of Mother Ireland, representing the suffering and sacrifice of the Irish people in their struggle for independence. Dora Sigerson Shorter's sculpture, A Monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week, reflects this ideal by depicting a strong, maternal figure who embodies the spirit of Mother Ireland and the nationalist cause. In this sense, the

[141] Patrick Pearse, "The Art Revival," *An Claidheahm Soluis*, May 5, 1906, Accessed March 1, 2023. https://www.irishnewsarchive.com/an-claidheamh-soluis-.

[142] Benton, 167.

sculpture serves as a tribute not only to the fallen volunteers but also to the families and loved ones they left behind. The figure's maternal appearance can be seen as a representation of the countless mothers, wives, and sisters who mourned the loss of their loved ones in the struggle for Irish independence.

Sigerson Shorter intended her work to inspire future generations to assume the mantle left behind by the fallen leaders. In this way, she drew inspiration from depictions of Cathleen ni Houlihan, who represents the spirit of Ireland and calls upon young men to fight and die for their country. The character of Cathleen ni Houlihan symbolizes sacrifice, patriotism, and the struggle for Irish independence, all themes present in Sigerson Shorter's sculpture. The combination of these elements in the Mother Ireland figure in *A Monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*, can be seen as a synthesis of the Roisín Dubh and Cathleen ni Houlihan, embodying the maternal grief and sacrifice associated with both characters.

A final note of the work's compositional styling is in the subtle connection of the figure's fingers. Interwoven or intertwined fingers are a common motif in art, symbolizing unity, love, intimacy, trust, and comfort. The intertwined fingers of Pearse and Mother Ireland in the Sigerson Monument represent several important Irish histories and cultural themes, such as the unity of the Irish people, connection to the land, and bravery, which were all central tenets of the Gaelic spirit. These tenets are also represented in the traditional Irish wedding ring, the Claddagh, which gained popularity in Dublin in the Victorian age.[143] Elizabeth McCrum asserts the Claddagh is a“regional variation of the 'fede' ring, the name deriving from the Italian 'mani in fede' (hands in faith).”[144] The Claddagh ring features two hands clasping a heart, with a crown

[143] McCrum, Elizabeth. “Irish Victorian Jewellery.” *Irish Arts Review (1984-1987)* 2, no. 1 (1985): 21.

[144] McCrum, “Irish Victorian Jewellery,” 21.

above it, symbolizing love, loyalty, and friendship. The interwoven hands in the Claddagh ring, like the intertwined fingers in the Sigerson Monument, signify unity and connection. In the context of the Sigerson Monument, Pearse and Mother Ireland represent the unbreakable bond between the Irish people and their land. The use of these powerful symbols in Irish culture was significant to many Irish nationalists who believed that reviving and celebrating the values of the Gaelic spirit could inspire a new sense of national identity and solidarity among the Irish people. By embracing these traditional values and symbols, they hoped to strengthen their connection to Irish heritage and foster a greater sense of pride and unity among the Irish people.

However, the symbolism can be applied more explicitly to represent the unity and resistance against British colonialism that characterized the Easter Rising and the broader Irish Nationalist movement of the early 20th century. With this focus, Pearse becomes a physical representation of the struggle of the Irish people against British oppression and the cruelty of the colonizers, who were willing to use violence and force to preserve their interests. The intimacy of his connection with Mother Ireland alludes to her blessing of Pearse and the other fallen soldiers following their ultimate sacrifice. This tender gesture unites Irish Nationalism as a modern embodiment of ancient Gaelic cultural values, with Mother Ireland symbolizing the nation's ancient and enduring spirit of resistance. Her intimate connection with Pearse merges the old Irish ways with the modern Irish Nationalist movement asserting that an independent Ireland would be possible only through the connection of these forces.

Sigerson Shorter's Monument in Glasnevin is a powerful symbol of the impact of martyrdom narratives on the memory and legacy of the executed leaders of the 1916 Easter

Rising. As Johnson notes, "Although monuments may seem inconsequential etchings on the landscape, small things are not trivial if they are symbolic."[145] The monument's significance lies in its ability to perpetuate a collective memory and create a sense of cultural identity that endures to this day, impacting the understanding and remembrance of the events of 1916.

Sigerson Shorter as a female sculptor and Early Irish Feminism

It must also be noted that the symbolism of Mother Ireland in the Sigerson Monument represents the role of women in the Irish struggle for independence. Women played a vital role in the fight for Irish freedom, and the figure of Mother Ireland is a powerful representation of the strength and resilience of Irish women during this time.

A unique aspect of the Easter Rising lies in its ties to not only Irish nationalism but also to other emerging modern movements, such as socialism and feminism. The Proclamation of Irish Independence was one of the first documents to reference women in equal standing with men. The Proclamation calls for the election of a permanent Irish National Government by "all her men and women," thereby proclaiming universal suffrage. The radical inclusivity seen within the Proclamation was not an anomaly but rather representative of women's roles in Irish society at the time and in the Irish Independence movement. Dana Hearne credits gender equality in Irish nationalism to the "presumption that once Ireland was free, the people would revert to a pre-colonial position where it was asserted, women had not only stood on an equal plane with men but had also been warriors and queens of fame and prestige."[146]

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[145] Johnson, 92.

[146] Dana Hearne,"The Irish Citizen 1914-1916: Nationalism, Feminism, and Militarism." *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 18, no. 1 (1992):3, https://doi.org/10.2307/25512892.

For some Feminists, the connection between Nationalism and Feminism provided them with the most significant opportunities: Freedom from imperialism and patriarchy. This progressive attitude towards women in Ireland allowed women to assume roles and positions uncommon for the time. Notable women of the time were doctors, scholars, and even armed participants in the Rising. As a result of this progressive feminism in Ireland, Sigerson Shorter was awarded the opportunities necessary for her development and creation of *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week.*

Sigerson Shorter's training and acclaim were not standard for women outside of Ireland in the early twentieth century. According to Caterina Pierre: "sculptors who happened to be female did not often win commissions for public sculptures; when they did, the subjects given to them were less politically charged."[147] Marjan Sterckx echoes this idea when she writes, "literally and figuratively, women sculptors were allowed to operate largely at the margins of the public space, making works with less weighty subjects, in less important formats and genres and for less prestigious venues, frequently for what may be called semi-public spaces—border zones that themselves were in-between the public and the private."[148] Sigerson Shorter's work defies the norm and exemplifies the progressive attitudes toward women in Ireland at the time. Not only was she given full training, but she was also one of the few female sculptors of her time who could make a living from her art. This feat was a remarkable achievement for a female artist at the time, as most women were not encouraged to pursue careers in the arts.

The Celtic Revival movement and the Irish Nationalism movement influenced Dora Sigerson Shorter's sculptures. These influences are evident in her work *A monument to Pádraic*

[147] Pierre, "Sculpture and the Public Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Site-Specific Art of the Cemetery, the Garden, and the Street" 227.

[148] Pierre, 227.

Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week by combining Irish mythology and folklore with the modern movement for Irish independence. She approaches her sculpture with a devotion to representing Mother Ireland as a strong woman, reflecting the Irish tradition of believing Irish women embody the same strength and abilities as Celtic goddesses and heroines. Such a notion represented a radical departure from the conventional representations of women in art at the time in other areas.

Conclusions

Through the study of this artwork and the motives of its creators, it can be successfully asserted that the visual arts had a significant impact on Irish culture, the pursuit of Irish independence, and the transformation of the Easter Rising leaders into martyrs.

Dora Sigerson Shorter's sculpture, *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*, exemplifies the role of sculptures in disseminating political ideals. The monument symbolizes honor and respect, conveying emotional and mythological resonance for the rebels who fought and died for Irish independence in the Easter Rising. The work enables the furthering of a sympathetic narrative by asserting that death may signify the loss of a battle but not the loss of the overall war, as the ultimate victory may only be achieved through great sacrifice.

The sculpture depicts Patrick Pearse as a fallen soldier of the Irish Republican Army supported by the lap of Mother Ireland. The female embodiment of Ireland symbolizes modern Ireland's connection to its ancient Celtic roots. As a mother who now knows significant loss, this representation of Mother Ireland is mournful yet defiant, embodying the history of Irish oppression and the cost of resistance. Such a depiction is cohesive with the Republican ballad tradition, which sought to depict the fallen Easter Rising leaders as martyrs, as a means of realigning the power dynamic within the British/Irish colonial relationship.

Sigerson Shorter's sculpture utilizes stylistic elements inspired by the Italian Renaissance to evoke conservative religious values under Irish Catholic Identity. Irish identity was closely intertwined with Catholicism, which had a significant historical connection to the fight for Irish

independence. Many Easter Rising leaders were devout Catholics who saw their struggle as a spiritual and moral crusade. The Church played a crucial role in the funerals and memorials of the martyrs, with priests and bishops leading the ceremonies and delivering eulogies. It also played a role in commemorating the martyrs in the years after the Easter Rising. These efforts stoked the fire for independence by constantly reminding participants of the brutality of English oppression.

The sculpture also symbolizes women's significant role in the Irish struggle for independence. The Easter Rising connected Irish nationalism with emerging modern movements such as socialism and feminism, allowing women to assume uncommon roles for the time. Dora Sigerson Shorter was an example of this, as her sculpture defied societal norms and exemplified the progressive attitudes toward women in Ireland. The representation of Mother Ireland as a strong woman reflected the Irish tradition of believing Irish women embody the same strength and abilities as Celtic goddesses and heroines.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of Sigerson Shorter's sculpture lay in her ability to unify aspects of the Celtic Revival movement and the Irish Nationalism movement, combining Irish mythology and folklore with the modern movement for Irish independence.

As a result of Sigerson Shorter's success in blending elements of the Celtic Revival and Irish Nationalism, the use of similar stylistic imagery depicting the fallen volunteers and executed Easter Rising leaders as martyrs for Ireland only grew in the years following the Easter Rising and the Irish war of independence. Sigerson Shorter’s work ensured that the lives of these men would continue to hold meaning and significance, not just for their contemporaries, but for future generations of Irish nationalists. Despite challenges to this narrative by the Pro-treaty

forces during the Irish civil war, the narrative persisted and remained very much alive through numerous annual celebrations of the Easter Rising.

In the years leading up to the centennial celebrations of the Easter Rising, Ireland began discussing how to reckon the damage caused to families through the destruction of Dublin and some of the less-than-appealing methods employed by the leaders to accomplish their goals have been undertaken. Through this reexamination, Ireland has embraced its status as an independent entity. The achievement of independence was made possible by the fire rekindled by the executed and fallen men of 1916, even though these individuals were human and made decisions that may be viewed as questionable from the perspective of later generations.

Judging from the current status of Scotland, another Celtic nation seeking its independence from Britain, it is unlikely that without the sacrifice of the leaders of the Easter Rising, the goal of Irish independence would have been realized. The evolution of these men into Irish political martyrs advanced by narratives expressed in the visual arts and culture of the time cemented their status as the founders of modern Ireland and continues to impact the lives of Irish citizens today.

The selection of images for this paper is noteworthy because they were relevant not only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries but also have a lasting significance that extends into the present time. While an attempt was made to thoroughly review current resources and the cultural history of the era, it was by no means an exhaustive review. Several areas of further exploration exist in terms of the later use of mythological figures, imagery associated with nationalist speeches, and even within the artwork chosen for banners or letterheads by the organizations of the time, as they are all rich imagery sources. I hope further research will be conducted on this topic as valuable insight into the birth of an independent Ireland and a modern

Ireland continue to emerge. As independent Ireland is still relatively new compared to other nations, the Irish people need to continue to develop their path forward to honor, reclaim and incorporate their storied history.

Illustrations

Figure 1

Figure 1: Dora Sigerson Shorter. *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*, 1918 (monument complex completed 1927). Carrera Marble in an Ashlar Limestone Pergola. Glasnevin Cemetary, Dublin, Ireland.

Figure 2

Figure 2: Dora Sigerson Shorter. Side view of Sigerson Monument-*A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*. 1918 (monument complex completed 1927). Carrera Marble in an Ashlar Limestone Pergola, Glasnevin Cemetary, Dublin, Ireland.

Figure 3

Figure 3: Dora Sigerson Shorter. *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*. 1918 (monument complex completed 1927). Carrera Marble in an Ashlar Limestone Pergola. Glasnevin Cemetary, Dublin, Ireland.

Figure 4

Figure 4. Dora Sigerson Shorter. Sigerson Memorial (Detail of Gables)-*A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week.* 1918 (monument complex completed 1927). Carrera Marble in an Ashlar Limestone Pergola. Glasnevin Cemetary, Dublin, Ireland.

Figure 5

Figure 5: Dora Sigerson Shorter. Sigerson Memorial (Rear of the Monument)-*A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week.* 1918 (complex completed 1927). Carrera Marble in an Ashlar Limestone Pergola. Glasnevin Cemetary, Dublin, Ireland.

Figure 6

Figure 6: Dora Sigerson Shorter, (Detail of bronze plaque with Sacred Fire)- *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades shot in Easter week.* 1918 (monument complex completed 1927). Carrera Marble in an Ashlar Limestone Pergola. Glasnevin Cemetary, Dublin, Ireland.

Figure 7

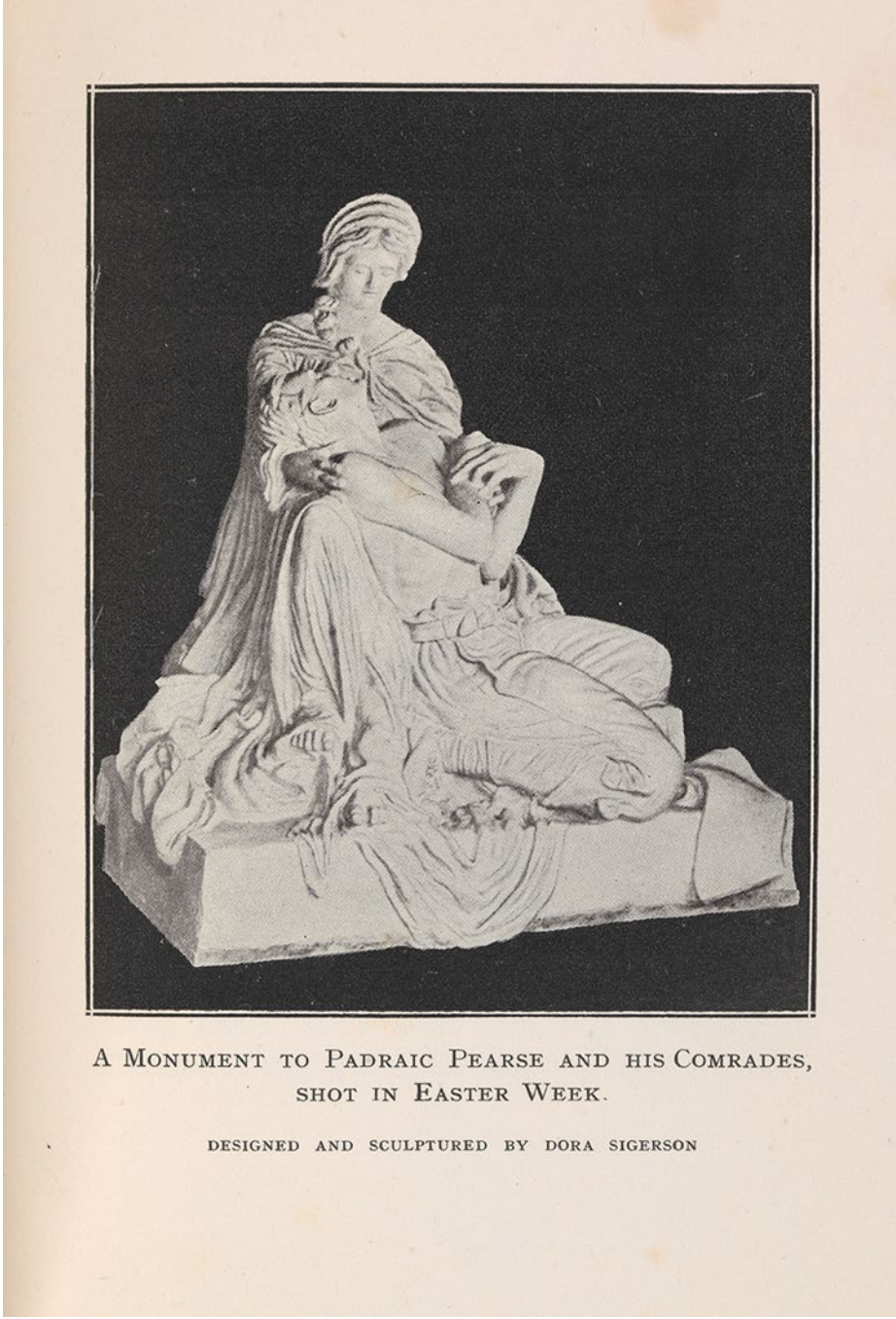

Figure 7: Dora Sigerson Shorter. *A monument to Pádraic Pearse and his comrades, shot in Easter week*, reproduced from '*The Tricolour'* (1922).

Figure 8

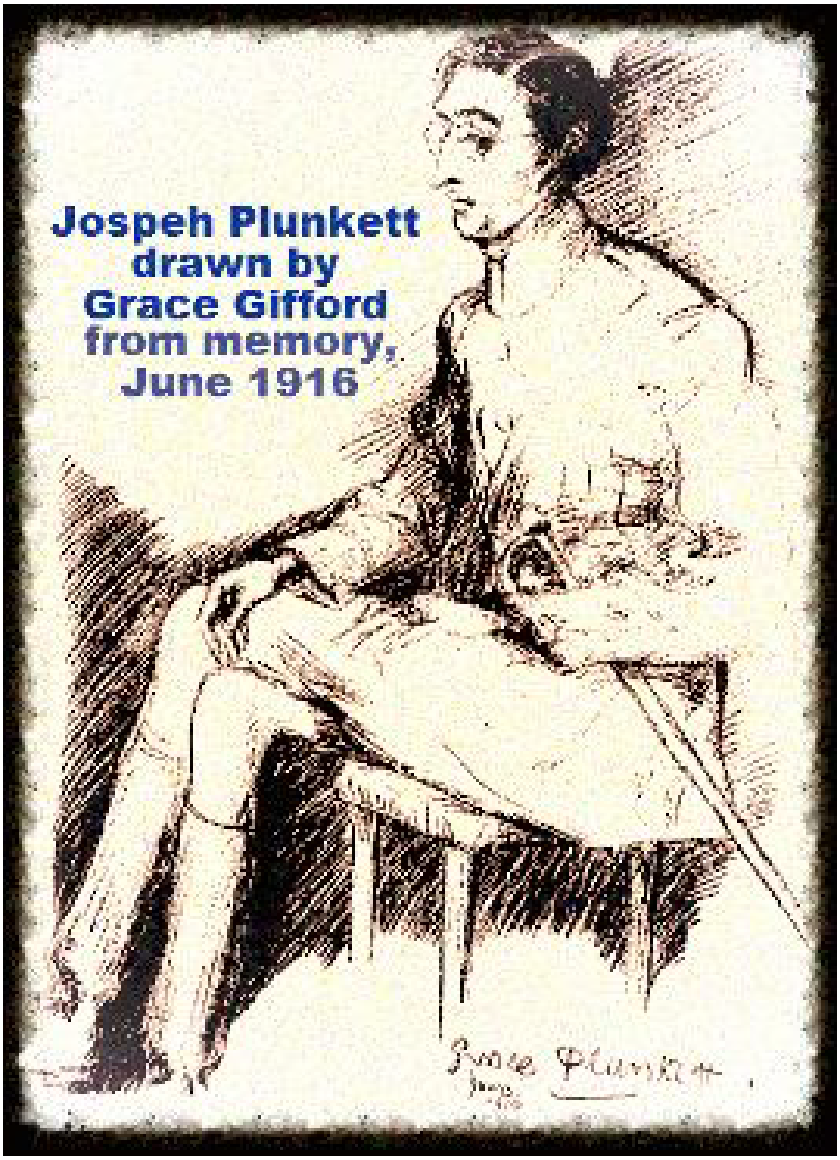

Figure 8: Grace Plunkett, *Joseph Plunkett from Memory*, May 4, 1916, Pen and Ink Sketch, Glasnevin Trust, Ie.

Figure 9

Figure 9: Mrs. Pearse Laying wreaths at Arbour Hill. 1916. Photograph. Dublin Irish Volunteers Archive.

Figure 10

Figure 10: Photograph of A man pointing to the spot in the Stonebreaker's Yard in Kilmainham Jail, where sixteen of the leaders of the Easter Rising 1916 were shot, Dublin 1916. RTE Stills Library.

Figure 11

Figure 11: Anonymous Artistic Rendering of the 1916 Executions, 1916.

Figure 12

Figure 12: Unknown, *Memorial Cards of the Signatories of the Irish Proclamation*, 1916, photograph, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Ie.

Figure 13

Figure 13: Photograph of a handbill depicting the leaders and organizers of the Easter Rising,1916. National Library of Ireland, EPH F339

Figure 14

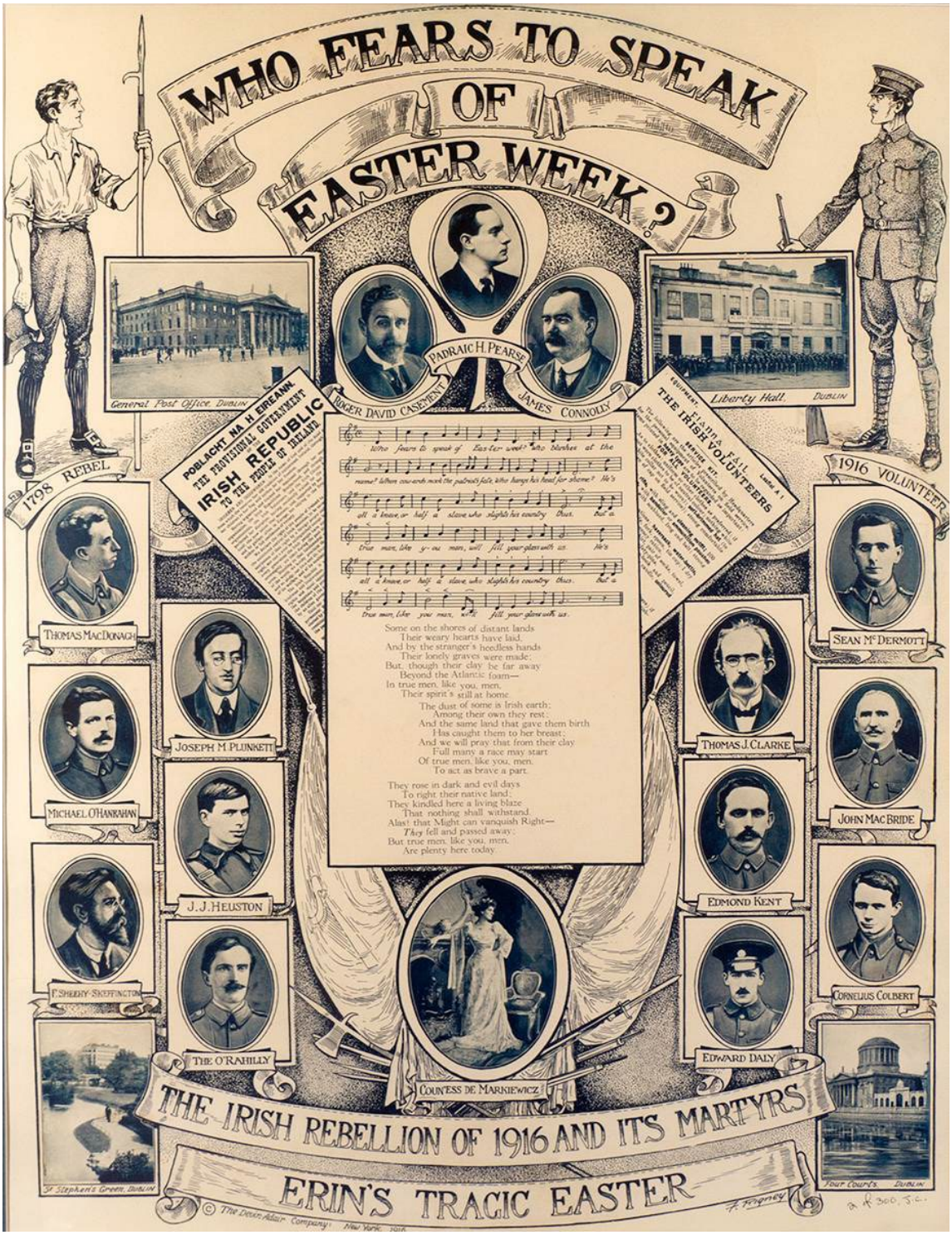

Figure 14: Published by S. S. Breathnach (J. J. Walsh), *Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week*, 1916, printed bill, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Ie.

Figure 15

Figure 15: Published by S. S. Breathnach (J. J. Walsh), Who Fears to Speak of Easter Week- P.H. Pearse, 1916, printed bill, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Ie.

Figure 16

Figure 16: Photograph of a handbill. Schutte, The execution of James Connolly, 1916, National Library of Ireland, EPH F339

Figure 17

Figure 17: Wolfe Tone Co. of New York, *The Irish Martyrs of 1916*, 1916, handbill 8x10, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin Ie.

Figure 18

Figure 18. Buonarroti, Michelangelo. *La Pietà*. 1498-1499. Marble. 174 cm × 195 cm (68.5 in × 76.8 in). St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City.

Figure 19

Figure 19: Hogan, John. T*he Dead Christ.* 1829. Carrera Marble. Saint Theresa's Carmelite Church, Dublin, Ireland. Photograph by Jcmurphy at the English-language Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2820590

Figure 20

Figure 20: Photograph of Patrick Pearse from the United States Library of Congress, Prints and Photograph Division. 1916. Digital ID cph.3b15294.

Figure 21

Figure 21: Elverly, Beatrice. *Eire*. 1907. Oil on canvas. 91 x 71 cm. Coll. Lady Davis-Goff

Figure 22

Figure 22: Oliver, Shepard or William (Willie) Pearse, *Roísin Dubh*, 1906. Saint Stephens Green, Dublin, Ireland

Figure 23

Figure 23: Oliver, Shepard or William (Willie) Pearse. Detail of *Roísin Dubh*, 1906. Saint Stephens Green, Dublin, Ireland.

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Appendices

[If applicable]