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(Re)Situating Women in Irish Revolutionary
History by (Re)Doing Undone Gender

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sean
O’Faolain’s Biography “*Constance
Markievicz*”.

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Abstract

The production of knowledge and claims of objectivity in Irish revolutionary historical narratives are discursively gendered processes which maintain a power-differentiation between the sexes through the assignment of a hierarchy of significance to the participation of men and women in the Irish struggles for independence. The partial visibility of women in such historical accounts is discursively maintained by the masculinization of Irish historical knowledge production where nationalist revolutionary discourses have been articulated by men as male-only spaces, preserving a hegemonic male-hero image. What happens to discourses of masculinity when leading women enter the realm of revolution? Do women, through active and prominent participation, threaten the stability of such narratives and of the discursively constructed social orders that are maintained by the privilege and power to define how history will remember who qualifies as a hero and who does not? The gendered selectivity of historical memory is often articulated through rhetorical applications of specific language manifestations which subordinate the participation of women in revolutionary narratives to the participation of men. The legacy of Constance Markievicz suffers from this biased form of knowledge production where a discursive gendered historical inheritance has tainted her common image in Irish history and social memory.

Key words: visibility, allegory, participation, objectivity, patriarchy

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Introduction

“Historical understanding is an open unfinished and imperfect mediation, conditioned by human finitude and the context of the situation” (Schmidt, 1996:105).

This is a thesis about the power of patriarchal privilege to discursively situate women in historical (biographical) narratives and to (re)situate those women who, through their leadership and actions in history, have threatened the stability and false legitimacy of a resilient structure of knowledge production, engrained in male-dominance and resistant to opposing forms of producing knowledge. This thesis critically challenges the hegemony of doctrinal claims of objectivity in historical accountancy by addressing how bodies are made, made meaningful and sometimes re-made to serve and uphold a patriarchal ideal and a hierarchical form of knowledge production that serves itself as a persuasive rhetorical instrument of power-differentiation between bodies, *real* and *symbolic* bodies.

The subject matter of this thesis more generally explores the production, reproduction and situating of knowledge surrounding the participation of Irish nationalist and revolutionary women in the fight for independence from British rule in the early twentieth century (ca. 1900-1926). The primary focus relates to Countess Constance Markievicz and how as a leading and controversial (female) figure she is historically represented by the knowledge produced in the first biography on her life, written in 1934 (seven years after her death) by the author Sean O’Faolain. Although several subsequent biographies have been written about Markievicz, mostly by female authors, the discursive effect of O’Faolain’s narrative extends into and beyond how this leading Irish revolutionary figure has been understood since the publication of his biography. Kristine A. Byron (2007), citing Coxhead (1965:81) suggests that the ‘legend’ of Markievicz has been distorted to be “/.../remembered for the wrong reasons, in the wrong way” (Byron, 2007:38).

Diana Norman’s biography *Terrible Beauty* (1987) suggests that Sean O’Faolain, in his biography on Markievicz, was “/.../affectionate but patronizing” in how he describes Markievicz’s mind processes. Diana Norman is highly critical of O’Faolain’s use of the term ‘intuitive’ to describe the intelligence of Markievicz, and quoting Spender (1982), suggests that when men are forced to accept the thinking of women, and especially the thought processes of powerful women, that they validate such thoughts as not having been reached

through reason “/.../but a much inferior, capricious and lucky process...*intuition*.” (Norman, 1987:13). Moreover, Norman argues that in ascribing ‘intuition’ as the qualitative trait behind Markievicz’s ideological and revolutionary mindset, O’Faolain had ‘mindlessly’ and incorrectly reduced the achievements of Constance Markievicz and condemned her memory in Irish history (Norman, 1987:13). Norman also argues that narratives surrounding Irish independence are predominantly male biased. Diana Norman’s gender related critique inspired me to read Sean O’Faolain’s biography where exploring the language and rhetoric of the discourses and discursive effects in O’Faolain’s biography became the primary focus of my research for this thesis.

In this thesis I do not support the notion of a complete ‘invisibility’ of women in Irish independence history. I contend that in historical knowledge production surrounding militant revolution and nationalist discourse in Ireland, women have been assigned a specific discursive space – that of domesticity and passivity. Their participation and role is often articulated through a specific masculinized rhetoric which has the discursive effect of rendering women ‘partially visible’ in narratives of Irish independence. I propose that this concept of “partial visibility” accounts for both the *passive* presence and *active* absence of women in these historical accounts and is manifested through such concepts as allegorical representation and the gendering of narratives.

I situate my theoretical approach within the scholarship of a feminist standpoint perspective and by critically analyzing the rhetorical discursive language used by Sean O’Faolain in his representation of Constance Markievicz, I aim to make visible the actual discursive rhetoric this author uses in his representations of Markievicz and of *women* in his book. Donna Haraway’s concept of the persistence of vision which calls for a doctrine of embodied objectivity, that is to say, a feminist objectivity or *situated knowledges* (Haraway, 2004:86) serves as an overarching theoretical framework that has guided this thesis. Joan Wallach Scott’s theoretical discussion on gender and the politicization of history is the main theoretical pillar on which I have based this thesis. Scott’s feminist historical approach entails not only recounting the great achievements of women but also proposes revealing the “/.../hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces” (Scott, 1999:27). This theoretical perspective governs my analysis of the rhetoric used in the construction of gender and textual representations of sexual differences used by O’Faolain’s in his biography on Markievicz. I apply Norman Fairclough’s three dimensional critical discourse analytical method to analyze the text of O’Faolain’s biography where I explore explicit and implicit

meaning making and discursive rhetorical devices and patterns that discursively represent Markievicz but may also produce the discursive effect of situating her and all women in Irish revolutionary history.

Background – Different Strokes for (in) Different Blokes

Irish Nationalism and Independence – The Realm of the Male?

The Irish struggle for independence from British rule in the early twentieth century has long been a subject of historical research with a plethora of perspectives regarding the role played by different groups and actors. The names of certain actors that dominate historical narratives of rebellion, civil war and the eventual formation of the nation state that is the Irish Republic of today are predominately male and are continuously remembered as masculine national ‘heroes’ (Ward, 2004:47). A romanticized legacy of the nationalist fight for freedom and the building of an independent republic has historically been projected as resting on the shoulders of fighting ‘brave men’, often depicted as the fearless sons of allegorical female figures – Kathleen ni Houlihan or The Poor Old Woman (see Byron, 2007:31). Leading men like Michael Collins, Eamonn de Valera and the seven male signatories of the Irish Proclamation of Independence (from the 1916 Easter Rising) have essentially dominated the discourse(s) that relate to early twentieth century struggles for Irish nationhood and independence.

Account and Accountability – Articulated Females in the Realm of the Hero

Margaret Ward (see McCoole, 2003) suggests that research into the history of female involvement in Irish revolutionary and nationalist organizations is up to the present time ‘under-researched and underestimated’ (McCoole, 2003:13). Contemporary feminist historians argue that historical research does not fully consider how the participation by women in revolutionary organizations demands closer scrutiny to include the constraints and consequences placed on these women as ‘women’ of their time. It has recently been recognized that Irish women did play a central role in the lead up to and during the 1916 Easter Rising, the Irish War of Independence (1919-1922) and the Irish Civil War (1922-23). Political organizations such as ‘Inghinidhe na hÉireann’ (Daughters of Ireland), ‘Cumman na mBan’ (The Committee of Women) and the women of the Irish Citizen Army (see Byron, 2007) played an integral and combatant role in these struggles. Countess Constance Markievicz, Kathleen Clarke and Maude Gonne were female leaders during troubled and chaotic times where ‘normally’, women were excluded in most aspects of public and political life. British ruled Ireland at the turn of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was

conservative and patriarchal, where men dominated the public and political spheres in society (McCoole, 2003:11)

Women have been inadequately recognized for their actual participation and role in achieving Irish independence by being confined to and defined along specific gender lines which situated and subordinated their participation (and continues to do so) to Irish men (Ryan, 2004:47). Recent research has also shown that the true extent of the active and militant part played by women was ‘hidden from history’ (McCoole, 2003:13) allowing historical narratives present and preserve a hegemonic masculinized image of the struggle for Irish nationhood. Such narrative accounts tend to omit or reductively condemn women to a more passive and motherly role associated with ‘domesticity’ and allegorical representation of the Irish nation (Kathleen ni Houlihan, Shan Van Vocht, see Byron, 2007). This gendered subordination is articulated explicitly and implicitly to discursively situate women into diminished positions behind men in Irish history, by rhetorically defining specific femininities in contrast to masculine heroic achievements, narrated for men by men. Domesticated femininity defined by patriarchs and depicted through rhetorical representations of womanhood become descriptions of women (sex) to explain women (gender), and vice versa. The discursive practice of ascribing intellectual and historical passivity to women produces certain types of biased knowledges, manifested and articulated through the consistent deployment of words such as intuition, instinct, natural, unintelligible, superficial and impatient to situate women in historical discourses, that is to say – articulated subordination through a *language of suppression*.

The Red and Green Countess – Socialist and Irish Revolutionary

Countess Constance Markievicz was one woman who entered the masculinized realm of revolution, not only as an active participant but in the capacity of a commanding leader. Constance Gore-Booth was born in London in 1868 into a ruling class family of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy. She grew up in County Sligo in Ireland, which was then part of the British Empire. Markievicz’s early life, as a privileged member of high-society was dominated by her love of the countryside and the people of the west of Ireland and of horses and horse-sports. She was renowned for her exceptional horse skills all over Ireland and Great Britain already as a child, a legacy that still lives in all researched accounts I have read about her life. She was caring and not class-conscious when it came to mixing with and often caring for the poorer tenant farmers on her family estate. She enjoyed her privileged upper class lifestyle, living in London for what O’Faolain calls her ‘coming out’ (O’Faolain, 1987:35) as a young

eligible lady, being presented to Queen Victoria and socializing as an ‘Irish’ member of the British elite. Attending art and theatre schools in London and Paris, Markievicz eventually married a Polish count – Casimir de Markievicz – and gave birth to a daughter Maeve. Her lifestyle and trajectory took a different course when she reached the age of forty. Markievicz became politically and socially active in nationalist and socialist (including feminist) movements in Dublin where she lived. Her involvement became a passionate belief in the necessity of Irish independence and of a Marxist ideology that would define a newly formed state. Markievicz turned to militarism and armed struggle and was as Steele suggests above, an active leader in all nationalist revolutionary campaigns against British rule in Ireland.

Described by the playwright Sean O’ Casey as being clothed with courage ‘as with a garment’ (Norman, 1987:12), biographer Sean O’ Faolain, cites A.F.’s memory of Markievicz’s ‘fine militant spirit’(O’Faolain, 1987:201) and further comments her ‘heroic life as a revolutionary’(O’Faolain, 1987:200). She was condemned to death for her part in the Easter Rising of 1916, which was commuted to life imprisonment to avoid societal backlash because she was a woman. She was released as part of an amnesty in 1917. She was the first woman ever elected to the British parliament (1918), and was one of the world’s first ever female ministers in a state government, the newly formed Dáil Éireann. Markievicz served several more prison terms for her other military involvements prior to the achievement of autonomy for Ireland in 1922, and as republican, she opposed the acceptance of the treaty in 1922 (ending the War of Independence 1919-1922) which divided Ireland into the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. Markievicz died in 1927, not living to witness the declaration of an Irish Republic in 1949.

Purpose, Aim, Research Questions, Limitations and Problems

Purpose and Aims

The overarching purpose with this thesis is to call into question the legitimized dominance of masculinized narratives of the struggles for Irish independence in the early twentieth century. By aligning with previously researched themes relating to gendered representations of women and female figures in Irish history, this thesis further explores how through such themes as allegorical representation, masculinization of narratives and the gendering of knowledge production, a structural masculinization of Irish revolutionary history is manifested and maintained. Previous research has shown that these themes often assist in assigning a diminishing and gendered identity to *women* to define their role in Irish nationalist and

revolutionary discourse as being related to femininity (defined by patriarchs), passivity and domesticity. In this thesis I propose to go further than merely discussing or confirming this *as* a discursive practice. I wish to explore if this discursive practice is evident in Sean O’Faolain’s biography *Constance Markievicz* where I will further examine potential discursive effects of this meaning making practice *for* Irish historical understandings of this woman. In that this was the first biography on Markievicz’s life, it is regarded by many scholars as the definitive account on the history surrounding her participation in Irish revolutionary and nationalist history. Recognizing that there is a discursive effect produced and maintained by the legacy of this historical narrative, I will critically analyze *if* and *how* Markievicz’s and other female representational identities are rhetorically articulated through discourses of gender and sex differentiation in this biography.

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the specific rhetorical articulation of language and patterns of language used in this book when analyzed through the lens of gender. By theoretically adopting Haraway’s concept of feminine objectivity and Scott’s association between language, gender and history, I wish to identify *if* and *how* discourses subordinating the participation of women to men in achieving Irish independence are manifested through language in this historical narrative by Sean O’Faolain. I regard such articulations as structuring a rhetorical language of suppression which specifically undermines women in history by substituting gender for sex and vice versa to produce biased gendered knowledges that uphold masculinized narratives. I contend that a language of suppression is often deployed by male historians when the participation of women in war and revolution threatens a dishonest legitimacy of objectivity in knowledge production which discursively and historically defines these spaces as masculinized and capable only of being occupied by masculine gendered heroes.

Louise Ryan (2004) has commented that “In the context of guerilla warfare, the blurring of boundaries between home and battlefield repositioned women in war zones” (Ryan, 2004:9). Byron (citing Higonnet and Higonnet, 1989) suggests that war and revolution as subjects of research, expose the importance of rhetoric in regards to how women are perceived and understood, even by themselves (Byron, 2007:3). In this thesis I aim to expose how women (in this case Markievicz) are also re-positioned in historical narratives when structural gender boundaries are challenged by female participation in Irish militant revolution. Gender becomes a renewable resource to maintain a power-based hegemony of differentiation between the sexes when masculinity (gender) is threatened by a woman (sex).

Research Questions

In his biography *Constance Markievicz*, how, from a gender perspective, does the author Sean O’Faolain discursively represent and historically situate Markievicz and her participation in early twentieth century Irish nationalist revolutionary struggles for Irish independence?

Is there a gendered discursive language of suppression evident in O’Faolain’s narrative biography on the life and times of Constance Markievicz?

If a language of suppression exists in the rhetoric of Sean O’Faolain’s narrative, what are the discursive effects of such a language on the representation and visibility of Constance Markievicz as an ideological revolutionary leader and on the collective significance of the participation of women in the Irish revolutionary struggles of that time?

Limitations and Problems

In this thesis I have limited my research to explore only gender related discursive elements of the language used by Sean O’Faolain to situate Constance Markievicz historically. I do not address or challenge the intellectual or nationalist political stance of the author. Citing Maja Sager (2011), I “/.../take my inspiration from the feminist tradition of a healthy ‘disrespect’ towards boundaries in the field of knowledge production” (Sager, 2011:25). However, in this thesis I have limited my own research to uncover if a gender specific boundary exists in O’Faolain’s narrative historical account on Markievicz. Narratives on her life are documented histories which I regard as discursively constructed fields of knowledge. I have confined myself only within the fields of research that consider a gender perspective in addressing Irish nationalist history. This has governed my approach to the previous research presented here in this thesis and to my analysis of Sean O’Faolain’s biography. I have focused on the conceptual themes of allegorical representation, masculinization of narratives and gender situation and substitution in knowledge production. I explore how a strategic deployment of these three concepts in Irish revolutionary history, regarding the participation and representation of women, has the rhetorical and discursive capacity to render women and their roles passive and partially visible in history. I problematize these themes as potential rhetorical devices that gender historical discourse to suppress women.

Methodological Approach and Theoretical Framework

Method – Critical Discourse Analysis

Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Philips describe the main aim of critical discourse analysis as seeking to “/.../explore the links between language use and social practice” (Jørgensen and Philips, 2012:69). They further argue that understanding how discursive practices maintain and challenge social order and invoke social change is central to critical discourse analysis (Jørgensen and Philips, 2012:70). Discussing Norman Fairclough’s application of the concept of discourse, they suggest that Fairclough limits discourse to semiotics (languages and images). Fairclough approaches discourse from three different perspectives; discourse may be understood as being constituted and constitutive of social practice through language use, discourse may be construed as a language applied within a specific space/field (historical discourse), discourse constructs and attaches meaning through a pattern of speech that defines certain experiences from a particular perspective (Jørgensen and Philips, 2012:66-67). Jørgensen and Philips suggest that discourse is integral in the construction of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and meaning. Referring to Fairclough’s method, they also suggest that a discourse analysis must include these three dimensions – text, discursive practices and social practices (Jørgensen and Philips, 2012:68).

These three dimensions of Fairclough’s method are central to how I approach my material in my application of Fairclough’s method of critical discourse analysis. I perceive any masculinization of historical narratives in Irish history as a discursive practice which has the capacity to maintain a specific hegemonic social order and organize and maintain social relations along gendered lines. I would argue that representational meanings are attached to gendered identities and are manifested through specific articulation of language which I have referred in the context of this thesis as a gendered language of suppression. My methodological approach also considers how social identities and knowledge production, within the specific field of Irish nationalist discourse, are discursively constructed through rhetorical language use and differential social relations of gendered power and privilege. I explore *if* and *how* these discursive practices and language are evident in O’Faolain’s text.

In this thesis I am specific in my own articulation and exploration of the concept a ‘language of suppression’ in historical narratives where in the spirit of Norman Fairclough I understand discourse as a particular perception of language in use, an “/.../element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements” (Fairclough, 2003:20). Fairclough’s approach to

social research always takes consideration of language. This is rooted in his assumption that language is dialectically interconnected with all other elements of social relations. Fairclough argues that language is an ‘irreducible’ aspect of those social relations (Fairclough, 2003:16).

By applying a critical discourse analysis to this historically significant biography, I contend that it is possible to understand how knowledge surrounding Constance Markievicz has been produced and is situated, particularly from a gender perspective. Inspired by Diana Norman’s biography and her reference to Sean O’Faolain’s account on Markievicz’s life as ‘patronizing’, I explore how the use of inclusive and exclusive forms of language may extend strategically (and selectively) throughout the text of O’Faolain. Moreover, by also relating to more recent (feminist) research into the role played by women in the struggle for Irish independence, this analysis perhaps allows for a deeper understanding of their situation in history. I would argue that they too, much like Markievicz, have been hidden from history or reduced to terms that render them partially visible by situating and (re)situating them through the patriarchal terms of others.

Theory – Situating a Gendered History

In her book *Gender and the Politics of History*, Joan Wallach Scott argues that she perceives gender as “/.../knowledge about sexual difference” (Scott, 1999:2). Scott suggests that gender had become a synonym for ascribed and so called natural differences between the sexes in public and political debate. Referring to a United Nations Program of Action drafted in Beijing 1995, Scott suggests that the application of the more than 200 usages of the term gender, were simply substitutes for the word “women” (Scott, 1999:xi). Scott argues that gender as a field of research has the capacity to explore the ‘social organization’ of the differentiation between the sexes without denying an existing patriarchal continuum of domination. Gender she suggests “/.../required careful reading of concrete manifestations, attention to the different meanings the same words might have” (Scott, 1999:xi-xii). This argument of Scott’s has been a theoretical pillar in my choice of method and my application of that method, where I explore, from a gender perspective how knowledge production in O’Faolain’s biography may (re)produce sexual difference and manifest those differences through specific articulations and words. I have termed these articulations as being a gender specific language of suppression. Scott has also stated that by considering language and knowledge production “History figures in this approach not exclusively as the record of changes in the social organization of the sexes but also crucially as a participant in the production of knowledge about sexual difference” (Scott, 1999:2).

My approach to this thesis addresses this theoretical contention of Joan Wallach Scott, where I also explore the partial visibility of women in Irish narratives as being constituted by the production of masculinized historical narratives that have the discursive effect of ascribing specific representational roles to women and men, thus defining sexual differences. It could be argued that the national identity of women and men in Ireland today may also be constituted by such a historical inheritance. Scott suggests that “/.../history’s representations of the past help construct gender for the present” (Scott, 1999:2). History, Scott argues, “/.../ is as much the object of analytical attention as it is a method of analysis” (Scott, 1999:2-3) and gender from a historical perspective *is* “/.../the social organization of sexual differences” (Scott, 1999:2).

Donna Haraway (see Harding, 2004:81-101) argues along similar lines where by critically assessing the sex/gender distinction in contemporary feminist scholarship, she suggests that sex is “resourced” to be re-presented as gender (Haraway, 2004:95). Central to this (re)presentation of sex as gender is the metaphorical relationship between language and bodies (Haraway, 2004:83) where embodiment for Haraway is intrinsically associated with a specificity of objectivity in knowledge production and the truth claims of that objectivity (Haraway, 2004:87). Haraway discusses how social construction theories identify rhetoric as the power tool behind scientific persuasion, used by social actors in scientific fields where knowledge is manufactured and made relevant through authoritative claims of objectivity. According to Haraway, objectivity is always power related. She argues that her main concern with previous constructionist approaches which challenge the truth claims of the legitimized hegemonic phallogocentric (read male-dominated) form of objectivity are metaphorical – the problematic relationship of bodies and language (Haraway, 2004:83). Haraway addresses what she regards as the reductionist aspect of science which adopts one language and where she argues that “All knowledge is a condensed node in an agonistic power field” (Haraway, 2004:82). I would argue that Irish revolutionary history is ‘masculinized’ through a specific language of suppression which has excluded women or assigned specific historical identities to women in the process of producing knowledge. I would further argue that all historical accounts, including those relating to Markievicz in this thesis, demand closer attention when analyzed from a gender perspective to explore this historical field as a sex-differentiated agonistic gendered ‘power field’.

Previous Research – Partial Visibility Made (in)Visible?

In this section of this thesis I will adopt three research themes that engage with both the absence and presence of gender and the power-differentiated dichotomy of the sexes in Irish historical narratives. The themes relate to the participation of women in Irish struggles for independence and the historical (re)presentation of that participation and those women; *allegorical representation* in Irish nationhood, *masculinization* as a gendering of Irish historical narratives and the *situating* of women as a *substitute* for gender in the production of Irish revolutionary discourse. I will also apply these themes in the analysis of Sean O’Faolain’s narrative on the life of Constance Markievicz. I have adopted a broader perspective with the previous research to not only focus on Markievicz but also to include different discourses of Irish historical narratives on nationalism. It has been suggested that the omission of women in the historical accounts and narratives from this time, has shaped and is shaped by the understandings of Irish independence as a male only dominated discourse (see McCool, 2003, Ryan 1999 and Matthews, 2010). In this thesis, I focus on *how* women have been rhetorically suppressed in these historical accounts where Sean O’Faolain’s biography is explored as such an account.

Allegorical Representations of Passivity to (Re)-present Active Women?

Gerry Kearns (2004) contends that it is common knowledge that women represent a feminized image of the Irish nation - an allegorical role that assigns a helpless passivity to the female figure. (Kearns, 2004:443) Kearns suggests that “The symbolic role of women in Irish nationalism has to some extent obscured their practical involvements” (Kearns, 2004:443) where he argues that ‘living women’ often reject and find insulting popular historic notions of the female image as symbolically passive. Moreover, Kearns argues that the production and ‘circulation’ of allegorical representations of women in Irish historical narratives of nation often places real women, the ‘flesh-and-bones cousins’ of allegorical women in the background (Kearns, 2004:444). Kearns (2004:444), citing Boland (1989) argues that historical allegorical representations of women assists in ‘evading’ the actual women of history, and neglects what he terms an ‘underground’ stream of women activists in Irish nationalism. In short, allegorical representations assign passivity to women and diminish the activity of real women in history, “/.../both in its view of the past and in its hopes for the future” (Kearns, 2004:444).

Kristin A. Byron follows a similar line of argument and discusses how a surplus of meaning for men in discourses of nationalism and the achievement of Irish independence (my

terminology) involve a deficiency of significance for the role of women. Allegorical assignment of predetermined more passive roles for women continue to “/.../affect possibilities for *real* women in society” (Byron, 2007:10). Byron argues that contrary to the tendencies of allegorically defining the nation as female/feminine, real women are often omitted in favour of allegorical representations (Byron, 2007:11). Byron discusses gender and nation as informed intersecting ‘constructs’ of each other. She further suggests that women have frequently been manifested as ‘allegorical analogues of nation’ and argues that nationalist discourses can depend on gendered representational strategies which ‘abet’ changing understandings of gender roles for real women (Byron, 2007:10).

Gerry Kearns suggests that both history and legend need their tellers where he further argues that allegorical representations can in fact, serve as symbols for the subordination of women but only when the meanings of such images cannot be challenged (Kearns, 2004:444). Kearns further argues that symbolic meanings embodied in national imagery, if complimentary to one’s lifestyle has the power to strengthen one’s common sense notion of “/.../the social contract defining the purposes of the nation” (Kearns, 2004:444). On the other hand, Kearns points out that if such allegorical representations are less than complimentary and may be experienced by some as patronizing, that the achievement of one’s hopes involve defying that social contract and as such, they must be challenged and rejected. Discussing Constance Markievicz, Byron suggests that “/.../she recognized that the contributions of women were, more often than not, forgotten, dismissed, or, at best, underappreciated” (Byron, 2007:39). Byron points out that Markievicz herself used both domesticity and femininity to construct a unique ideal of the Irish female hero (Byron, 2007:39), but where Markievicz advocated a long tradition of participatory Irish women heroes in revolution and war. Using her own recent experiences and militancy, Markievicz established herself as an active and *living* ideal, not for self-gain but to provide a model of example for other *living* women and for the women of the future (Byron, 2007:39).

Gerry Kearns suggests that “Living women are...national resources. Only in the service of others are they allowed to realize their potential” (Kearns, 2004:443). Byron however, argues that Markievicz relied on rhetorically using allegory to synthesize “/.../garden, nation, gun and prison to carve out a place for female heroism in twentieth century Ireland” (Byron, 2007:53) Allegorical representation for Markievicz was a rhetorical and historical device to politically and ideologically tie and untie the future of an independent Irish nation to the ‘domestic’ by asserting that revolution ought to be the business of women, not a source of

subordination for women. Byron further argues that the context of revolution provides a platform to examine the politics of gender (Byron quotes Scott, 1999). Moreover, Byron discusses how ‘symbolic systems of representation’ which develop under revolutionary times, as ideals fought for by women for women, become the very ideals that often fail those women in post-revolutionary societies (Byron, 2007:4). Byron contends that to be able to define their own identity as embodied and real women and to avoid being omitted from history as individuals, female revolutionaries must plot a course through the complexities of allegorical representations of women in a gendered (masculinized) nationalist discourse. (Byron, 2007:11)

(Re)Doing Gender – The Masculinization of Irish Nationalist Narratives

“Narrative has to do with the articulation of what happens as time goes by. Or...as time went by?” (Björling, 2004:17) (see Grelz and Witt, 2004).

Ann Matthews (2010) suggests that the history of Irish republicanism is dominated by narratives of militant men who rose in arms to secure independence from British rule. Louise Ryan (2004:47) discusses how representations of Irish femininity were often narrowly limited in masculinized narratives of Irish independence. Examining historical accounts of active republican men in the War of Independence who had served alongside their female counterparts, Ryan investigates how these men represent the women in their own narratives relating to these times. Ryan identifies how masculinization of such narratives is directly responsible for the feminization of the role of women as confined to the realm of domesticity. Ryan further argues that ‘slippage’ between real images of real Irish women and allegories situated Irish womanhood during these times in and through such narratives (Ryan, 2004:54). She suggests that “Representations of women are usually contained within the conventional narratives of grieving mothers or passive, nameless victims” (Ryan, 2004:47). These ‘conventional’ narratives relate to what Ryan suggests are marginalized and sanitized historical accounts of the active and militant role of women in the texts of republican men. She argues that the reliance of such men on the participation of women, despite necessity, was deemed within nationalist discourses as an act of weakness (Ryan, 2004:48). Therefore, the narratives of such men project the male hero as honorable, chivalrous and brave, and simultaneously ascribe passivity and domesticity to the role of women. Ryan especially suggests that the historical accounts of the Irish War of Independence especially emphasize heroism as a property of young men. Women are visible in these histories but only partially for their militant participation. They are perceived as having been active and courageous but

are primarily understood and defined within /.../the parameters of narrowly defined gender specific roles; situated in the domestic sphere, they have a motherly relationship with the young...men” (Ryan and Ward, 2004:47).

Ryan and Ward (2004) make a similar point of contention as Byron (see above), arguing that rights won in conflicts of nationalism are often diminished or lost during the process of building the nation-state (Ryan and Ward, 2004:2). They suggest that in the immediate years following the achievement of Irish independence from Britain, leading male participants in the nationalist revolutionary movements were assigned public ‘positions of power’ while the women involved were essentially maneuvered out of the public sphere (Ryan and Ward, 2004:4). Ryan and Ward also cite Ailbhe Smyth (1991) who suggests that “/.../ Irish nationalist discourse uses woman as a sign ‘in a discourse that from which women, imaginatively, economically politically disempowered, are in effect and effectively excluded’ (Ryan and Ward, 2004:2). They explain this strategic exclusion as a denial of the everyday experiences and individual agency of women as active and equal national citizens, where defined as ‘women’, they became the carriers of a symbolic notion of nationhood (Ryan and Ward cite McClintock) – “/.../symbolically subsumed into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit” (Ryan and Ward, 2004:2). Ryan and Ward further discuss McClintock’s suggestion that although no ‘universal blueprint’ of nationalisms define a single narrative of nation, all nationalisms are discursively gendered (often employing traditional and gendered ideologies), where women are situated in subordinated roles to the participation of men, and mostly confined to domesticity (Ryan and Ward, 2004:2).

Louise Ryan (see Ryan and Ward, 2004) argues how “/.../The fact that women were expected to take second place behind the cause of Irish freedom...suggests something of a gendered nature of the republican campaign” (Ryan, 2004:53) Ryan concludes that narrative accounts, written by men at this time, were strategically written in a rhetorical form that served to uphold a gender hierarchy (read patriarchy) by containing, sanitizing and depoliticizing the participation of women in the various wars of Irish nationalism and independence. Ryan however, argues that the active participation of republican women (she refers to the Irish Civil War) was negatively understood in the public domain and was the source of ‘dilemma for many men’ (Ryan, 2004:48).

Situating 'Women' by Substituting Sex as Gender – Gender (in)Competence?

Sari Oikarinen explores and analyzes the ideology and activism of Constance Markievicz “/.../within the context of Irish intellectual and political history during the first two decades of the century” (Oikarinen, 1998:18). Oikarinen’s research is interesting from a gender perspective because she proposes to use gender as an analytical tool. Oikarinen focuses especially on how Markievicz could relate the fight for independence and the aspirations of a new ideal and inclusive Irish society of the future specifically to the role of the sexes, that is to say, defined roles for men and confined roles for women. Recognizing Markievicz’s position as an ideological revolutionary leader and leading political figure and government minister is what Sari Oikarinen suggests differentiates her dissertation from other ‘traditional biographies’ (Oikarinen, 1998:18).

Louise Ryan (1999) discusses how the active participations of women in the armed struggles for independence of the early twentieth century in Ireland were very diverse and significant to the achievement of that independence. Ryan discusses how the contribution of (leading) women to the militant independence campaign had from a gender perspective ‘transgressed and negotiated gender roles’. Citing McClintock (1993), Ryan further suggests that in the broader context of gendered nationalisms, the identity of people is defined through socio-political tensions that are most often violent and ‘always gendered’ (Ryan, 1999:256). Ryan argues that women have been subordinated in history to what she terms nationalisms that ordinarily “/.../spring from masculinised memory and masculinised hopes” (Ryan, 1999:256), and suggests that ‘womanhood’ has been assigned a specific space in nationalist rhetoric.

Sari Oikarinen argues that Constance Markievicz was contradictory and inconsistent over time in her approach to womanhood and the role of the sexes. Prior to the 1916 Rising, Oikarinen suggests that Markievicz understood the progress of all republican and nationalist movements as an opportunity for the awakening and advancement of women (Oikarinen, 1998:84). Moreover, Oikarinen argues that although Markievicz had clearly defined ideas of how women could participate alongside men in militant struggles, she viewed all forms of activism as having a progressive potential for the advancement of women in society. By aligning herself however with the Irish Volunteers movement who advocated that participation for women in revolutionary struggles was primarily to be a supportive and nurturing role, Oikarinen suggests that such roles were contradictory to Markievicz’s own unique vision for women in this fight (Oikarinen, 1998:85).

Louise Ryan, citing McClintock (1993:62) suggests that gender differences regarding men and women are symbolically used in male dominated notions of nationalism to “/.../define the limits of national difference and power between men” (Ryan, 1999:256). The concept of the national hero is inextricably associated with the armed conflict for independence and is predominantly represented as male, whereas the female, as a national identity is defined to maintain “/.../the embodiment of its respectability” and symbolically become the guardians of tradition (Ryan, 1999:256). Ryan argues that this has effectively situated women into domesticity as the nurturers of family life.

Sari Oikarinen suggests that ideologically Markievicz was heavily influenced by her sister, Eva Gore-Booth, a renowned suffragette who wanted to reform the power relationship between the sexes by abandoning what she regarded as the dishonesty and artificiality of ‘traditional sex-roles’ (Oikarinen, 1998:87). Constance Markievicz’s ideas differed on some key issues where Oikarinen argues that sexuality was not central to Markievicz’s line of thought whereas Eva believed that the unequal power-differentiation between men and women was intrinsically related to the “/.../nature of the sexual union and its consequences for women” (Oikarinen, 1998:87).

Analysis of O’Faolain’s Text - Challenging His- story of Her- story

”History never becomes happy where the memory is too long” (O’Faolain, 1937:16)

Situating the Analysis

In this analysis I will explore the same three discursive themes that have been presented in the previous research section of this thesis. These themes relate to Irish nationalist and independence history and different discourses within such current fields of research which consider a gender perspective; allegorical representation, the masculinization of historical narratives of Irish nationalism and independence, and the situating and substitution of gender in historical narratives. It is my intention to firstly explore if these discourses occur in the biography *Constance Markievicz* by Sean O’Faolain by conducting a critical discourse analysis of that work. Analytically I have approached this biography as a personalized historical narrative – by this I mean that the author narrates to a reader of the biography *his* historical account of *her* life. The main goal of this analysis is to examine if these discursive themes are present and if so, to explore how they may or may not contribute to a partial or reduced visibility of Markievicz’s achievements and of other women in this book. What is of primary interest is to explore how such discourses may be articulated and deployed by the

author to represent and situate Constance Markievicz and/or other women, as revolutionaries and as gendered identities.

Norman Fairclough defines discourse analysis as ‘oscillating’ between research on specific types of text and what he terms ‘orders of discourse’ – he relates orders of discourse to the durability of socially structured language as an element of the structuring of durable and hegemonic social practices. Critical discourse analysis focusses on the durability’s that permeate continuity and social change, abstractly and from a structural perspective.

Fairclough argues that texts may reveal a strategic and consistent articulation which may be exposed if they are perceived through a lens of ‘interdiscursive analysis’ – “/.../seeing texts in terms of the different discourses, genres and styles they draw upon and articulate together” (Fairclough, 2003:18) This analysis is based on this methodological approach where through a lens of gender and guided by Scott’s theoretical challenge of gender and history (see Scott, 1999:xi-xii), I examine potential ideological effects of patriarchy articulated through a specific language and structural patterns in the biography of Sean O’Faolain.

Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Philips discuss how in critical discourse analysis, it has been suggested that *discursive practices* (my italics) “/.../contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups...between social classes, women and men...” (Jørgensen and Philips, 2002:63). Moreover, they argue that these contributions by discursive practices are ideological effects articulated through language. To adopt the concept of ideological effects of discursive practices allows for the possibility for the theorization of the subjugation of one group by another; in this thesis, the discursive and narrated subjugation of women to men in the rhetoric of Irish nationalist history. Jørgensen and Philips further suggest that critical discourse analysis focuses on both discursive practices and the effect of discursive practices in constructing and maintaining unequal power interests for certain groups. Subject positions, social relations, representations of the world and power relations are established through discursive practices and also (re)established through discursive effects (Jørgensen and Philips, 2002:63).

Exploring Patriarchal Privilege – Discourses Dominating the Narrative?

In this biography, Sean O’Faolain has structured his narrative to follow Constance Markievicz’s life from childhood into adulthood, from privileged society lady to nationalist political revolutionary and militant social activist. His narrative is divided into titled chapters that follow the timeline of her life, where each title assigns a strategic nomenclature and

significance to that period of Markievicz's life, that is to say, the reader's knowledge is situated prior to reading the content by the chapter title. I have identified this as a first discursive practice deployed by O'Faolain, manifested by the strategic choice of title for each chapter – the author 'situates' the knowledge of each coming chapter concerning Markievicz's life and as such the author implicitly situates the reader as to what to expect in that chapter. Sean O'Faolain opens his biographical account on Constance Markievicz with a chapter entitled "The Wild Irish Girl 1868-1900". Immediately it is clear from the language use in this title that three key concepts discursively dominate the text; the use of the word 'wild' has the discursive effect of implying nature and by articulating the words 'Irish' and 'girl' sex/gender and nationalism are situated.

"Women are kinder (when they are kind), more immediately opportunist, and less suspicious (when they have decided not to be suspicious) than men" (O'Faolain, 1987:80). I would argue that this statement is both explicitly and implicitly derogatory of women. The context the author relates to was a suggested greater willingness of women over men in nationalist movements to accept the Countess when she became politically and culturally active in Irish nationalism. Markievicz had turned her back on her British aristocratic ruling class background and had adopted the Irish nationalist and socialist causes. O'Faolain explicitly suggests that women were less concerned with her background than men. This is the 'world' of the then hegemonic discourse of patriarchy – the differentiation of the sexes. However, the explicit references made to the kindness and suspicion of women as a matter of their own choice and collective nature not only situates women as *a* gendered identity, but I would argue hides a more sinister underlying implied meaning. In between these two human traits of kindness and suspicion, the introduction of the word sequence 'more' 'immediately' 'opportunist' and is followed by the sequence 'than' 'men'. The first sequence manifests two discursive effects; it suggests that *women* as a gendered identity are impetuous and not in control of reason (this coincides with the numerous references the author makes to the intuitive and instinctive character of women's intelligence demonstrating a structural rhetorical pattern) and in combination with the last sequence, the discursive meaning making effect that is created implicitly seems to assign superior traits of carefulness, reasonability and patience to men. This also then has the meaning making effect of legitimizing the suspicions of men who perceived Markievicz with caution, given that she was a former beneficiary of the ruling class of a foreign occupier. Identifying this discursive practice of relating Markievicz to the Anglo-Irish ruling class is ever present throughout the text of the book. O'Faolain, writing

in the nationalistic spirit that defined (1937) Free State Ireland, describes this ‘class’ of people with disdain, criticizing their attempts to adopt and integrate themselves into becoming a part of Ireland (and his notion of Irishness) both before and after the achievement of independence.

This next statement, referring to the Anglo-Irish ascendancy demonstrates the discursive effect of O’Faolain’s own suspicious attitude to the former ruling class; “Even their very latest efforts, half-hearted as they were, to become part of Ireland only brought a smile of pity to the faces of the most sympathetic Irishmen...” (O’Faolain, 1987:16). In this statement there is a clearly defined identification of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy as a new embodiment of ‘the other’, not to be respected but to be admonished. O’Faolain may be referring to himself when he describes ‘the most sympathetic Irishmen’. In short, the suspicions of men are validated (including his own) by the combined discursive effects of making Markievicz suspicious by virtue of her class of birth. By ascribing gender roles and assigning opposing and sex-differentiated human qualities to those roles, the meaning making effect is manifested through an explicit language of suppression of women and implicitly through the discursive effect of a dominant discourse of the book – the subordination of women to men.

Another example of this pattern of discursive effect/discourse is evident in this statement; “Henceforward she came within reach of the antennae of men acting deliberately where she acted by instinct, men searching consciously and deliberately for their own type where she searched with blind feelers” (O’Faolain, 1987:120). Explicitly and once again intellect and wisdom is assigned to men and spontaneity and instinct assigned to Markievicz as a woman. Explicitly the author suggests that men knew what they wanted and also their own type but that *she* was blindly following men relying only on her senses to do so. Implicitly, this has the effect of disowning Markievicz, because she is a woman, of the capacity to reason through intellect and intelligence. It also places her under the mentorship of and reliance on the intelligence of men and their type. At the time this book was written (1934), Markievicz was seven years dead but was remembered as a leader in republican movements. However, in this statement she is reduced and transformed from a leading woman into a blind searching follower reliant on the influence of men.

I have chosen this next passage from the biography to demonstrate the gendered articulation of a suppressive language in the text of Sean O’Faolain; “Constance Markievicz, in her woman’s way, had no intelligible ideas but many instincts. It both annotates Griffith’s

influence on her, and measures her instinctive wisdom that she abandoned Griffith as soon as she met Connolly...She drew naturally away from the man with the long view to the reformer with the defined ideas” (O’Faolain, 1987:74-75). The first aspect of this statement that I wish to focus on relates to the attribution of intelligence to the men Markievicz associated herself with politically and the re-assignment of instinct to her wisdom as a woman. The author assigns the responsibility of Markievicz’s political development to the ideological differences between two men. I would argue that the three discursive effects occur from this articulation; firstly intelligence is once again gendered as a naturalized male quality and by referring to a ‘woman’s way’ and ‘instinct’ (this term appears twice in the same sentence) these qualities are deployed as being supplementary for a lack of reasoning intelligence in women. By using a term such as ‘in her woman’s way’ a differentiation between the sexes reduces not only Markievicz but women collectively to unintelligible. At the same time later in the same sentence, a complimentary tone is ascribed to Markievicz for the measure of *her* (my italics) ‘instinctive wisdom’, which implicitly seems to suggest that her instincts were superior perhaps to other women – never reasonably equivalent to men but superior for the intelligible capacity of her sex. Secondly an underlying suggestion of reliance is implicitly introduced – the achievements and ‘intelligible’ gains made by Markievicz were only so because behind her social and political ‘metamorphosis’ was the ideas of two men. Markievicz is rhetorically placed in the shadow of these men – in this ascribed position in this context, she is also transformed from an ideological leader into a reliant follower. The very structure of patriarchy is reinforced by articulating a very specific type of language to remove reason and agency from Markievicz as a leader because of her sex; this also discursively situates all women. Thirdly, Markievicz is denied the same privilege that is afforded to these two men – that is to say the privilege of ownership of agency in the formation and development of political opinion. The opinions of these men is not identified as being liberal or Marxist (Griffith was a liberal and Connolly was a Marxist), but they are implicitly assigned the capacity for reason to further and maintain those opinions. This freedom seems denied to Markievicz, but by the inclusion of the term ‘woman’s way’ in relation to the use of the term ‘unintelligible’, it seems rhetorically evident that the freedom of the capacity for reason, is also denied to all women. This is significant because all influence appears to be gendered one way process– these men are depicted as only influencing Markievicz, but never she them. Reducing her to unintelligible has the discursive effect of denying her the capacity to be influential to these men.

This and other gendered and suppressive statements are frequent throughout this text and demonstrate a clear pattern between the contexts these statements relate to and the pattern of rhetorical articulation and deployment of these statements. It seems plausible to suggest that a dominant discourse of the subordination of women to men is behind such statements where in this thesis I would argue that all of these statements are articulated through a specific discursive language of suppression. What is common to all three statements is that they all relate to Markievicz's leadership as a woman and that they all reduce Markievicz as an ideologically capable leader. Furthermore, these statements discursively reduce Markievicz to a woman by the removal of the capacity for reason and intelligence, maintaining a sex-differentiated power divide between men and women in history. This is once again a dominant discourse evident in this biography - the assignment of a collective gendered identity to Markievicz, to rhetorically suppress women. When the male-hero image is threatened, these rhetorical inclusions have the discursive effect of maintaining this notion as a masculinized discursive space.

Allegorical Representation – Resourcing Activity to Re-Present Passivity

In Chapter (iv) entitled “The Poor: 1911-1913” O’Faolain makes an association between Markievicz and the then popular allegorical representation of Ireland and Irish nationalism as the Poor Old Woman (O’Faolain, 1987:102). ”/.../she too, hypnotized by the same rich-dream-colour of the Poor Old Woman, could not see, for more than a little interval, that the poor old women of the Dublin slums were, in their rags, a dream beyond even that panoply of ancient vision. That brief interval of lucidity she owed to a man whom her class and blood called and treated as a yahoo” (O’Faolain, 1987:102). The man O’Faolain is referring to was a socialist and union leader named Jim Larkin, whom O’Faolain suggests was a ‘born leader’ and was everything that Markievicz aspired to be but could never be at that time. In this statement the author both situates the romanticized wave of nationalism that engulfed Ireland at that time through his use of the words ‘rich-dream-colour’ and engenders that nationalism and image of Ireland as feminine by using the allegorical representation of The Poor Old Woman. This image he then associates with Markievicz where he suggests that the hounds of Irish nationalism’ had a ‘hypnotizing’ effect ‘on her. His use of the word ‘hypnotizing’ is significant in that it has the meaning making effect of reducing Markievicz to an easily convinced or blind follower and not an intellectually equal comrade of similar ideological interests. That Markievicz’s involvement with the socialist movement in Dublin would eventually end in a return to nationalism and where the ideal of The Poor Old woman is

assigned a meaning by O’Faolain as being the solution to a temporary distraction (socialism) also implies that Markievicz was always searching for an ideology, but never developing one. The reality of real bodied poor old women from the Dublin slums is deployed in direct contrast to the dreams of a free nation and the iconic female image of that nation. The allegorical representation of the Poor Old Woman is challenged by the poorer living existence and embodiment of poverty stricken women in Dublin. O’Faolain once again here in this statement re-situates Markievicz from Irish nationalism and Irishness by referring to ‘her blood and class’. The author, as I have previously discussed is discursively reminding the reader that Markievicz was Anglo-Irish and of the former ruling class of a privileged and doubled as a symbol of British rule in Ireland as well as an Irish nationalist.

Another manifestation of allegorical representation is evident in this statement; “The result was the creation not of a political philosophy but of a heroic attitude. When the Party began to weep over Cathleen ni Houlihan/.../” (O’Faolain, 1987:174). Cathleen ni Houlihan is an allegorical representation of Ireland as depicted by Nobel laureate W.B. Yeats in his play of the same name (the Poor Old Woman is used in this play). Reading further on this page O’Faolain then discusses Markievicz. “When...Constance Markievicz began to taste the quality of this second movement of which she found herself a member – and this time a prominent member – it is not surprising if she, by nature a highly emotional woman, felt the hypnotic influence in the glittering vision of Pearse, and forgot the ...not at all spectacular ideas of Connolly” (O’Faolain, 1987:174). Sean O’Faolain once again, in his employment of allegory in relation to Markievicz returns to the notion of Irish nationalism and the ideology of a male revolutionary leader and fellow officer from the 1916 Rising, Padraig Pearse. Again the discursive effect of ‘hypnotism’ is used to relate Markievicz to both nationalism and passive acceptance of the ideas of a man. Once again, the author re-situates her as a ‘prominent’ leader in the shadow of a male- hero, Padraig Pearse. O’Faolain is consistent in doing this and a pattern continues to emerge whereby he assigns all ideological capacity to men and assigns passivity and intuition to women. O’Faolain rhetorically removes Markievicz from behind the ideological shadow of one man, James Connolly, to re-situate her in the ideological shadow of another man, again Padraig Pearse.

The concepts of ‘nature’ ‘emotion’ and ‘senses’ (taste) are introduced which discursively situate Markievicz as a woman as passive beside a man. By specifically pointing out her ‘prominence’ as a female member of the nationalist movement, her position as a leader is recognized but is subordinated from that significance as a woman to that of a hypnotized

follower, and more specifically a female follower of a prominent man with influential ideas. I would argue that another use of allegory here is far more subtle but is implicitly employed in O’Faolain’s use of the sequence ‘glittering vision’ and ‘Pearse’ together with nationalism. In a previously analyzed allegorical reference, Padraig Pearse is once again at the center of O’Faolain’s deployment of allegory. In the first sentence the Yeatsian creation Cathleen ni Houlihan refers to Ireland as a saddened woman. Another ancient allegorical representation of Ireland is the vision of a beautiful young maiden, an Aisling (aisling poems), an iconic image of a glittering beautiful woman often portrayed as arising from the lake waters (See Ward and Ryan, 2004). The glittering vision he refers to may indeed be an association to the allegory ‘Aisling’ and/or ‘Rosín Dubh’ (Dark Rosaleen) in that the author articulates this representation in relation to the nationalist vision Padraig Pearse had for Ireland. I would suggest that allegory is discursively present in this meaning (Jayne Steel (2004) discusses that Pearse, one of the most celebrated Irish patriot heroes of 1916, wrote a poem called “The Mother” while waiting to be executed for his role in the Rising) (See Byron, 2004:97). What is interesting here is that once again concerning gender, Markievicz is firstly situated as a woman by the author, she is then denied ownership of leadership by the author by re-situating her not as a leader but a follower. This is a consistent rhetorical style that O’Faolain uses in his narrative every time the notion of Markievicz’s intellect, influence and leadership are discussed – a pattern emerges that seems to suggest intention but which also can be understood as a dominant discourse which generates and maintains throughout the biography, a suppressive discursive effect which diminishes the achievements of Markievicz as a leader and as a woman. My contention is that this is achieved by the author through his deployment in this narrative of a specific language of suppression which serves to disown intellect, reason and leadership from women. Allegory in the text of O’Faolain is a resource for gender assignment and for the subordination of women.

The Masculinization of Her-story - Undoing ‘undone’ gender to (Re)do ‘Done’ Gender

To describe the husband of Constance Markievicz – Count Casimir de Markievicz – O’Faolain suggests that he was large, handsome and generous, comfortable in the company of both men and women and in an understanding rhetoric he argues that “Of such a man love-affairs were only to be expected” (O’Faolain, 1987:38). This statement brings with it a discourse of expectant sexuality related to privilege and gender – a man of this type is articulated as naturally inclined to attract and be attractive to the opposite sex where nothing

was abnormal for that to lead to extra marital affairs or casual sexual contact for a man of his good looks and stature. Sex for this man is depicted as a right. In direct contrast, when O’Faolain describes the relationship between Constance and Casimir, he comparatively demonstrates how their compatibilities were problematic on some key issues, of which sexuality was one. Constance Markievicz is described in direct contrast to her husband, Casimir; “Worst of all, she was, it is clear, sexually cold. These, alas, were things that nobody could then have realized” (O’Faolain, 1987:39). How O’Faolain is so ‘clear’ about this sexual coldness is unspecified by him, leaving a reader to either accept his intimate knowledge of this stated ‘fact’ or to assume the author’s authority on such issues. In the foreword to the 1967 edition of the biography O’Faolain states that he ‘explicitly’ wishes to take this issue up because he had previously avoided it in the book proper. He suggests that Markievicz was most likely a naturally celibate ‘type’ where love for her was a disembodied experience. Referring to her affectionately as Constance, Sean O’Faolain suggests that her passion was more for her ideals and humanity than for a man or her family. By referring to Markievicz by her first name, the author discursively personalizes the sexual ‘relationship’ he has with her in his text, and whilst a sympathetic tone is adopted in the rhetoric towards both her and the ‘victims’ of the loveless and sexless nature she had, I would suggest that discursively two things happen. Firstly by manifesting a sexual frigidity, Markievicz’s propensity to militarism and revolutionary causes are explained by her abnormal sexuality – she was not a ‘feminine’ woman. Markievicz is articulated as a real embodied woman, abnormally a woman rejecting an instinctive passive, domesticated and sexualized role. Secondly, Markievicz is defined as being unique for being a woman, where her sense of duty was elsewhere other than with her husband and child. However, this uniqueness is depicted not as an attribute of compliment but rather as a sadness for those affected by a chosen (or natural as O’Faolain suggests) lifestyle. Sean O’Faolain finishes his piece with this suggestion; “When such a woman marries, and has a child, then husband and child had better look out for themselves” (O’Faolain, 1987:8). A discursive shift from the personal to the collective occurs here, by the use of the sequence ‘such a woman’ and by using the word ‘marries’ a sense of failure to duty is invoked by suggesting that a husband and children are the victims of abandonment of that duty.

That Constance Markievicz was for her time, a rather unconventional woman (given the circumstances women were subjected to by society) is undisputable, but O’Faolain’s statement seems to imply that this ‘abnormality’ extended into matters of her sexual make-up. Perhaps, he too, being a man of this time, superimposes his own ‘knowledge’ of the sexuality

of women in marriage as being related to ‘duty’ and not to ‘choice’ or ‘consensus’. I would argue that these statements suggest more about O’Faolain’s sexual expectations of women as a collective gendered identity than it does convey a factual representation of Markievicz’s. Perhaps, it would have been more accurate to suggest that not only was this woman in charge of her own social and political destiny, but it seems evident that gender awareness gave her control of her private and intimate social relationships also. On this point, the male establishment is most challenged by the notion of a sexually independent woman, not subjected to a sense of duty, but independent of a forced sexuality as a duty to be fulfilled. Perhaps, by assigning this disdainful description of Constance as a ‘sexually cold’ woman, the author inadvertently reveals his own underlying sense of self regarding women and regarding sex. Most of O’Faolain’s informants are predominantly male – he turns to male counterparts as reliable sources of information. This I suggest is further evidence of the ‘partial visibilities’ of the many women involved in nationalism and republicanism – they are seldom referred to or relied upon by O’Faolain - making him part of that process of reduction.

Situating Women as Femininity– Agenda, A Gender or Both?

In chapter 1 *The Wild Irish Girl: 1868-1900* O’Faolain discusses how Constance was the first born to her parents, which although in itself was a matter of great significance for that family, he also suggests that it also represented from the *then* perspective of high society, more likely a disappointment. A daughter he contends was not encouraged ‘in such circumstances’ (O’Faolain, 1987:15). Here the author implicitly seems to suggest an expectant preference for male heirs among the ruling classes for the continuation of inheritance through that son. British high society in the age of Victorian imperialism was explicitly patriarchal (McCoole, 2003:11) Discussing the educational opportunities of children born into the wealth of the empire, O’Faolain discusses how male children would be destined for Public School, but if such children had “/.../the misfortune to be born ‘opposite sex’ ” (O’Faolain, 1987:15), that education was provided by governesses employed in the home. It is interesting that early on in the biography how the biographer seems to install a discursive notion of subordination towards women while describing the expectations and potentialities for boys and girls of the upper class at this time. His use of the word ‘misfortune’ is questionable from a gender perspective. To situate Constance Markievicz (he refers to her affectionately as Con) as a woman and a gendered identity in the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, O’Faolain suggests in §2 of chapter 1 that three possible fates ought to have been her destiny; “/.../either she became an ornament, at best graceful, of the little social round that divided itself between the drawing-

rooms of Dublin and London; or she became a philanthropist, in Ireland or out of it, and with more hope of requital out of it than in it; or she might snatch, from whatever Victorian society still retained of the traditions of the Anglo-Irish bucks, as gay and unconventional a life she dared and her allowance could afford” (O’Faolain, 1987:20). These articulations appear to be directed to the society women of the time, and whereas Markievicz was of the class and type O’Faolain respectfully argues that Markievicz did not follow any of the routes expected for women of her class and time. She broke with the traditions of her class and refused to subordinate herself to the gender repressive expectations of that class. O’Faolain suggests that the young Constance Gore-Booth “/.../craved freedom from the beginning” (O’Faolain, 1987:23), being what he refers to as a ‘unique’ child (O’Faolain, 1987:24). It is important to remember that O’Faolain was of this vintage, and I would argue that he does not offer to condone the suppression of women nor does he consider his articulation of women of any class. In choosing to define the plight and status of women as ‘naturally’ or ‘unnaturally’ destined for them by their patriarchal peers, I would further argue that in doing so, a doing of gender is reproduced and assumed which is not altogether supportive of Markievicz’s achievements as a woman but more defining of those achievements as being ‘unique’ for her being a woman. O’Faolain’s deployment of the term ‘unique’ in relation to Constance Markievicz is not always entirely complimentary to Markievicz or to women in general. O’Faolain reduces Markievicz’s young life to one surrounded by horses; “/.../The young child...cannot have closed her ears and eyes to everything but horses” (O’Faolain, 1987:64). O’Faolain’s use of the concepts of ‘child’, ‘girl’, ‘natural’, ‘wild’ is discursively deployed in a less than complimentary manner throughout the first chapter, where Constance Markievicz’s life is outlined from childhood to marriage. Born in 1868 and married in 1900, it seems that to assign childhood to this 32 year period is a very long time indeed. O’Faolain discusses how Constance and her sister Eva perhaps disappointed their mother (O’Faolain, 1987:35) by opting to ‘go their own way’ and at the same time uphold the tradition of wildness of the Anglo-Irish tradition.

Conclusion

In this thesis, guided by three specific research questions, I have analyzed discursive articulations of a gendered language that masculinizes Irish history – that is to say, I have discursively exposed and made visible what has been made partially visible in time and historical space through exclusionary, diminishing and gendered discourse(s). By critically analyzing the language of the discourses in Sean O’Faolain’s biography, I have explored how

a discursive language of suppression is articulated by the author (I do not discuss intentionality) which undermines and diminishes Constance Markievicz as a leading Irish nationalist and revolutionary and as a woman. I have further examined discursive effects of how such a language, as it is deployed in O’Faolain’s biography, situates women in Irish history by (re)situating Markievicz as a woman, by diminishing her leadership and ideological capacity in the achievement of Irish independence. In challenging the dominance of male-only hero narrative(s) and how they are discursively formed and maintained, specifically those articulations emanating from the historical discourses of Irish independence, I have discursively included the activism and participation of Irish women, not as an alternative to existing narratives of Irish independence, but as a step towards a *completion* of such narratives.

Kristine A. Byron’s suggests of Constance Markievicz that “/.../it would be naïve to assume that she was not mindful of the power of her persona or that she did not calculate many of her actions” (Byron, 2007:38). Central to this thesis was Joan Wallach Scott’s theoretical discussion on adopting a feminist historical perspective where Scott suggests that “Simply to assert...that gender is a political issue is not enough. The realization of the radical potential of women’s history comes in the writing of histories that focus on women’s experiences and analyze the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics” (Scott, 1999:27). I have approached the concept of a partial visibility and/or strategic ‘exclusion’ of women, not as a missing chapter to be included and rectified, but as an unwritten or incomplete chapter that is *integral* in those narratives. I would argue, that the discursive practices involved in forming such narratives may have been part of a process to define a predetermined role (to be) ascribed to women in the newly formed Irish state following the achievement of autonomy.

In her writings and speeches, Constance Markievicz made known to the public domain that revolutionary participation was an important role for women to exact social change and was central to “/.../redefining women’s roles in the public and private spheres” (Byron, 2007:39). Byron suggests that Markievicz was not only challenging and undoing gender boundaries, but I would argue that in the process, she (her significance) was provoking the hegemonic inheritances of Irish masculinity, perhaps awakening what Diana Norman suggests is “/.../the masculine fear of unbridled women” (Norman, 1987:52). It is plausible to suggest, how, having exposed suppressive articulations in the rhetoric of O’Faolain, that his masculine

discursive understandings of gender and of sex are discursively provoked by the actions and historical potential of the memory of this leading woman.

I would argue that Sean O'Faolain's consistent discursive practice of 'naturally' positioning Constance Markievicz in the shadow of male heroes and as an ideological follower reliant on the intellectual ideas of men can be understood as an attempt to undo the undone gender that Markievicz actually represented as a woman for women. Moreover, by discursively substituting sex for gender and vice versa, I would argue that O' Faolain's rhetoric generates a discursive effect of re-situating Markievicz in history as a woman, governed specifically by the author's own gendered understandings of what a woman is and how a woman ought to be. This discursive practice does not recognize Markievicz as a female nationalist leader unbound by masculinized societal norms, but rather, through the use of a language of suppression, reduces Markievicz to being an unintelligible woman on O'Faolain's terms only. I would suggest that a corrosive discursive effect of O'Faolain's constructed narrative memory of this woman is that his-story has served to deny generations of Irish women equal access to a feminine hero (such as men have 'enjoyed' and claimed masculine heroes as their legacy). When discursively analyzed it may be further argued that this biography denies Markievicz the potential to fully influence future generations of Irish women and continues to deny generations of Irish women knowledge of a more complete narrative inheritance of a female role model for women, who did challenge and undo gender norms through her active participation in achieving and owning the achievement of Irish sovereignty. Constance Markievicz's memory and legacy, when viewed through a lens of gender, can still serve in providing a historical example and discursive potential for women to continue her example and to claim equal ownership of the (masculinized) privileges that ought to have followed for women with winning Irish independence.

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