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Lest We Remember. Why does the Irish State not commemorate the National Army soldiers who died during the Civil War?

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This paper asks why the National Army Civil War dead are not commemorated in Ireland. Identifying a distinct gap in the literature regarding the Irish Civil War in general and the commemoration of the National Army war dead in particular, the research tackles some key assumptions regarding commemoration in Ireland, challenging in particular the assertion that historic amnesia towards military service in Ireland pertains to the British Army alone.

At national level, the commemorative ceremonies for the Irish State's own war dead reflect ambivalence about asserting the State's origins, but also highlight a tension between the different traditions in Ireland. Approaching the problem through examination of both commemorative ceremonial and some of the key surviving structures of monumental material culture in the Irish commemorative landscape, this paper finds that this ambivalence is significant, reflecting perhaps Ireland's political and strategic culture. Ireland shares some similarities with the Spanish experience of its civil war, but differs substantially in how it has essentially avoided the issue. Drawing on themes such as inclusiveness, 'good history' and ethical remembering in commemoration, this study argues that there are inconsistencies in the Irish commemorative landscape which contradict the notion of real inclusiveness. The conclusion of this paper is, therefore, that in Ireland today, as for most of the twentieth century, the National Army soldiers who died fighting for the State are not appropriately commemorated, either by the State, or by the Defence Forces. Moreover, it would appear that the Defence Forces itself has never really developed its own internal culture of commemoration since, United Nations service aside, there is almost complete amnesia regarding its dead from the Civil War, from the Emergency period and from the Troubles.

Private James Clarke was a 19 year-old soldier in the National Army (NA) when his small party was ambushed by anti-Treaty forces near Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, in late November 1922. He died "almost immediately from the wounds he received", leaving behind his parents and five siblings, who were "wholly dependent" on his income (Clarke, 1923). His mother's application for a dependent's pension, dated 29 November 1923, which pleads that the family had received "not

even his pay due to him at time of death or funeral expenses", is a tiny but poignant glimpse back at just one fragment in the reality of conflict in Ireland, one hundred years ago. There is no memorial or roll of honour to Private Clarke's memory. He has essentially been forgotten.

This paper seeks to explore how it is that one cohort of Ireland's Civil War casualties - the soldiers who died on the government side - have been forgotten, even as Ireland approaches the conclusion of the so-called 'Decade of Centenaries' and the centenary of that war. A number of obvious questions arise. Why does Ireland not commemorate or even remember those who died in the service of its armed forces, even while commemorating the Irish who fought in the British forces? How can we usefully explore these questions within the confines of history or even historiography? How does this experience compare to that of other countries who suffered civil wars?

Literature review

In terms of secondary sources, few prominent academics have written directly on the subject; the best example being Dolan's evocative *Commemorating the Irish Civil War* (Dolan, 2006). Although written at a disadvantage – before the first online release of the Military Service Pensions Collection in 2014 (MA, 2014) – Dolan's work encompasses a strong social and cultural history dimension. This and some of her later work (Dolan, 2014) is hard hitting, essentially arguing that not only has the Civil War been largely ignored by historians, but that the Irish State was, from the beginning, conspicuous in its failure to provide anything approaching a meaningful commemoration for the NA fallen.

Ferriter's two major publications (Ferriter, 2005, 2015) provide a masterful oversight into Ireland through the revolutionary period. The University College Dublin historian provides interesting insights into how political imperatives can shape commemoration and even historiography, but there is little direct consideration of the commemoration of the Civil War dead.

Langton's *The Forgotten Fallen* (2019) is a worthwhile and overdue examination of the individual stories of those who died on the NA side and is the first attempt to systematically locate the final resting place of each soldier – including those lying in pauper's graves.

Of course, a study considering the cultural aspects of commemoration must, of necessity, look beyond traditional historiography and consider what cultural historians have to say. Winter's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Winter, 2009) and some of his later work (Winter, 2014) stand out in this regard, providing a useful European context against which to consider how Ireland has commemorated – or forgotten – the dead from its Civil War. For a comparison of Ireland's memory of its Civil War with the Spanish experience, both Bueno's writing (2013) on the cultural legacy of Spain's major memorial to the war and Renshaw's work (2011) on the archaeology of Spanish Civil War graves is particularly relevant, exploring how commemoration, memory and history are contested between state and non-state actors.

Historiography around commemoration inevitably grapples with concepts such as revisionism and even morality; these are particularly pertinent when historians write about grave subjects such as violent death and suffering. In this regard, the late Trinity College Dublin Professor Fitzpatrick provides food for thought on how scholarly writing around commemoration ought to be "good history", avoiding the pitfalls of simplistic narratives and misleading dichotomies (Fitzptrick, 2001, 2013).

While attention will be paid here to more recent trends in historiography, such as in the fields of transnational and comparative studies (Whelehan, 2014; Fitzpatrick, 2017; Newby & McMahon, 2017), exploration of the research question through other, potentially fruitful avenues – for example the field of memory studies (Jeffrey, 2000; Morcillo, 2013; Proust, 2017; Ricoeur, 2006) or the rationale behind violence in civil wars (Kalyvas, 2006) – is acknowledged but is necessarily constrained by the short scope of this paper.

Research lacunae

Having briefly examined the literature it is apparent that a number of lacunae exist. Firstly, while the general subject of commemoration in Ireland is well covered in the literature, there is a paucity of research dealing specifically with the Civil War dead on the NA side and how they are commemorated. O'Halpin and O' Corráin's long-awaited *Dead of the Irish Revolution* (O'Halpin & O' Corráin, 2020) is an unprecedented publication in both its scale of ambition and the quality of its research, but it unfortunately stops short of the Civil War. With a perceptible shift in historiography over the past 20 years or so "in the direction of social and cultural history" (Ferriter, 2005, p. 1) – partly facilitated by the opening up of archival collections and their mass digitisation – much of the 'new' Irish literature on commemoration has attempted to consider more fully groups which were previously side-lined or ignored altogether. McCoole (2003) and Ferriter (2015) for example, have both made extensive use of the Military Archives' Collections to highlight the role of women in the revolutionary period. Duffy (2015), similarly addressed a significant gap around the memory of the children who died during the 1916 Rising. Surprisingly, until Langton's work, there was no authoritative study of those who died on the NA side. Moreover, Langton's work, while very valuable, serves rather as a detailed listing of those NA personnel who died – it does not set out to provide a critical analysis of the State's response to its war dead.

Beyond historiography, the landscape of material culture in commemoration has changed conspicuously, with the Glasnevin Trust for example erecting a 'necrology wall' in 1916 for *all* of those who died during the Easter Rising, with plans to continue the inscriptions for the War of Independence casualties (McGreevy, 2020). Notwithstanding such welcome diversity in terms of commemoration however, Dolan would appear to be the only academic historian in Ireland who has addressed the specific case of the NA soldiers and how the State has commemorated them. This paper seeks therefore to explore a facet of Irish history, which like the casualties of women and children, has been largely ignored.

The research questions

This paper proposes the overarching research question: why does Ireland not commemorate the NA soldiers who died during the Civil War? Several alternative approaches to tackling this problem were considered, for example a thorough analysis of all available primary sources regarding the State's commemorative policy vis-à-vis the NA war dead. It was considered most appropriate however – both to avoid the narrow confines of purely political history and acknowledging the constraints of a short paper – to address the questions across three separate enquiries. Firstly, what is the commemorative landscape in Ireland and how are the NA war dead commemorated? Secondly, how does commemoration of the NA war dead feature in the surviving material culture? Thirdly, can any comparisons of the Irish Civil War commemorative experience be made with that of Spain? Chapters one to three will therefore address these questions, in order, followed by overall conclusions.

Primary sources

A number of key sources can enrich our understanding of the period. The Bureau of Military History Collection at the Military Archives (MA) provides invaluable context, even if most statements are limited to the 1913-1921 period. Of even greater importance to the above questions is the gargantuan Military Service Pensions Collection at the MA which, crucially, includes the Civil War period and is "…an archive that opens a window on social and economic history" (Ferriter, 2012). Other useful primary sources include contemporary publications such as *The Irish Times* and *An tÓglach*, which provide unrivalled detail and a sense of local feeling regarding casualties and commemorative events. Also at state level, the State's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Commemorations provide a useful context for how the 'Decade of Centenaries' has been handled up to the present day. However, in general and given both the limited scope of this paper, the focus will lie rather on secondary sources, in particular authors who have availed of the primary sources noted above and others in their research. The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of access to archives and libraries have unfortunately precluded use of some primary sources, such as government records from Finance and Defence that are not digitised online and may have informed certain aspects of policy around commemorations.

Outline methodology

A humanities qualitative research approach has been adopted for this paper. In formulating a research methodology, consideration has also been given to an examination of secondary sources in the field of cultural history (Winter, 2009, 2014). This paper will also consider how historiography and politics can influence commemoration and whether there is a role for the historian in attempting to shed light in an ethically sound way on such contested spaces as the received memory of a civil war, since "morally neutral commemoration is a dangerous deception" (Fitzpatrick, 2013, p. 127). The concept of "ethical remembering" has been a central theme in the Presidency of Michael D. Higgins (President of Ireland, 2020, para 3), while Higgins (Higgins, 2020, para 5) has argued that "ethical remembering will require us to shine a light on overlooked figures and events as all of us with intersecting stories attempt to achieve a deeper, more balanced and inclusive perspective".

The author's own bias as a serving officer in Óglaigh na hÉireann, with considerable prior involvement in State-led commemorative events, is noted and flagged to the reader.

PART ONE – Commemoration in Ireland

In the wake of the Anglo-Irish Truce to the War of Independence, the Irish people voted narrowly in favour of the December 1921 Treaty. This ultimately resulted in the partition of the north-eastern part of the island and the emergence of an independent Irish Free State. Shortly afterwards, in the general election of June 1922, support for the Treaty was again visible, this time among a far greater majority of the population. If, as Gray (2012, p. 7) has convincingly argued, "war is political behaviour using the agency of force", then the conflict that followed (from 28 June 1922 to 24 May 1923), was indeed a war.

Approximately 780 soldiers (Langton, 2019) of the National Army (NA) died therefore in prosecuting what was ostensibly an extension of the political and democratic will of the Irish people, or at least the Irish people outside of the six counties that would become Northern Ireland. It is worth pointing out that the NA's direct antecedent was the Irish Volunteers/Irish Republican Army (IRA) and that the Army later became the modern Defence Forces (DF), under the 1923 Temporary Provisions Act. In other words, the NA was, by any measure of the term, the legitimate army of a democratic nation state. It would follow that the new Irish State might

therefore seek to honour, or at least to commemorate the men who died, often in horrific circumstances, serving according to the wishes of the Government and the majority of the people.

The focus of this section will be to explore just what it is we mean by 'commemoration', how commemoration has occurred in the Irish context and to what extent the NA war dead have been commemorated in Ireland up to the present day.

Towards an understanding of commemoration

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2020), the etymology of the verb 'to commemorate' is derived from two Latin words: "*commemorāt*, participial stem of *commemorāre* to bring to remembrance, make mention of" and "< *com-* + *memorāre* to relate, mention". Falling somewhere between history and memory, commemoration has never been easy to define beyond linguistics, since all of these are to some extent subjective. This point is addressed by the Irish Government's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Commemorations:

> The aim of commemoration should be to broaden sympathies without having to abandon loyalties … we should also be conscious that on this island we have a common history but not a common memory of these shaping events (EAG, 2017, p. 3).

Historians may take all necessary academic and historiographical precautions to remain objective, to seek a 'truth', but the writing of history has varied over time and almost inevitably falls prey to the historian's contemporary bias. Marwick (2001) calls for strict interpretation in his 'catechism' of questions to ask of historical sources, including an analysis of who produced such sources and why (Marwick, 2001, pp. 180-185). Some historians such as Fitzpatrick (2013), have pointed to the tension between history and commemoration, noting that "history and commemoration are not incompatible, but the proper relationship between these two pursuits is contested and uneasy" (Fitzptrick, 2013, p. 126). Fitzpatrick essentially argues that history can become something of a hostage to commemoration, which can be driven by everything from public sentiment, to political imperatives to a desire to impose our modern sensibilities on the past. Daly (2004, p. 48) similarly points to the impact of the present day on the process of commemorating, arguing that "commemorations reveal much more about contemporary Ireland than about the actual history". Bruton (2016), a former Taoiseach, points to the role that commemoration has in shaping the future too, arguing that it "should reflect our aspirations for the future, rather than just simplify or romanticise the past". Of course, commemoration can also be simplistic: Foster (2006) describes the relationship between memory, commemoration and 'storytelling' with some perhaps uncomfortable observations about the simplicity of the commemorative narrative adopted for the bicentenary of the Irish 1798 Rebellion.

The commemorative landscape in Ireland and the Great War dead

Before considering how the subject of this paper – the NA war dead – are commemorated, it is appropriate firstly to consider how the largest cohort of Irish war dead, those who served in the British forces in the Great War in particular, are commemorated in Ireland. In May 2016, a ceremony took place at Grangegorman military cemetery, near what is now McKee (formerly Marlborough) barracks commemorating for the first time the soldiers on the British side who fought in the 1916 Rising. It seemed a world away from what has been characterised as the somewhat homogenous 1966 Easter Rising commemorations (Daly & O'Callaghan, 2007). The

event represented perhaps a high point in terms of the inclusivity that the Irish State and indeed its people sought from the decade of centenaries.

Nevertheless, a narrative (Myers, 2015) has existed for quite some time that Ireland (i.e. the Irish Free State and later Irish Republic) had looked uncharitably at the commemoration of war dead with the British forces, despite the obvious fact that an estimated thirty-five to forty thousand were Irish. Some historians however, including notably Jeffrey (2000; 2014) have challenged this notion that Ireland, at least before the Emergency/Second World War, had actively forgotten its war dead in the British forces. Jeffrey contends that historians have "only patchily" (Jeffrey, 2014, p. 118) explored war commemoration in the Republic, since commemorations were well attended in the interwar years, with an estimated seventy thousand people attending an Armistice Day commemoration on 11 November 1924, including some twenty thousand (British Army) veterans (Jeffrey, 2014). Indeed, Jeffrey underlines the fact that commemoration of the First World War – and the involvement of Irishmen in it – was widely commemorated "by all sorts of Irish people" (Jeffrey, 2014, p. 118).

If Irish service in the British forces was at times through the twentieth century muted in official Ireland, it could not be said to be so now. The most prominent war memorial in Ireland remains the Lutyens-designed National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge, Dublin. Even Glasnevin Cemetery, which functions as something of an 'Arlington' for the nationalist and republican tradition, containing the graves of prominent leaders from O'Connell to de Valera, is still in the process of erecting physical commemorative objects for the Irish who fought in British forces. These include a Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) 'Cross of Sacrifice' in 2014 and more recently a 'Necrology Wall' to commemorate "all those who died in the Irish revolution", including in the Crown forces (McGreevy, 2020). As we shall see in the next chapter, commemoration happens not just at state level, but at a personal and community level (Winter, 2009). In this regard, the incredible volume of commemorative plaques and effigies in virtually every Church of Ireland place of worship nationwide are noted, even if the absence of such plaques from the Catholic Churches perhaps serve to prove a point about community remembrance even at the level of Christian worship. The sheer scale of the CWGC headstones erected in virtually every townland in Ireland is impressive, with no parallel in the State's own military culture.

Evidence of commemoration of the NA war dead in Ireland

The commemorative landscape in Ireland regarding military personnel who fought and died during the revolutionary period 1912-1923 can be broadly divided into four categories: those who served in the British forces, chiefly in the Great War (as discussed above); the 1916 Rising; the War of Independence and the Civil War. The latter category is the focus of this study and can be further divided into commemoration based on the pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty positions. As we have seen, some limited comparison between and among the above categories is useful, but it seems clear overall that the pro-Treaty (or NA) fallen, numbering some 780 soldiers all told (Langton, 2019) are the least well represented in the Irish commemorative landscape (Dorney, 2017-b). In the next section we shall consider this assertion in the light of evidence of commemoration for the anti-Treaty war dead, but firstly we shall briefly analyse how Ireland commemorates the NA war dead in State ceremonial events, in the material culture of the State's commemorative spaces and internally within the DF.

At State ceremonial level, there is no single event to commemorate the NA war dead. This is unlike, say, the Armistice Day Commemoration which takes place on each Remembrance

Sunday in Islandbridge (in which the State participates, sending a DF National Colour Party), or unlike the State's 1916 Rising Commemoration held at the General Post Office (GPO) each Easter Sunday. The only event at which the NA fallen could be construed to be part of is the National Day of Commemoration, which usually takes place at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham on the Sunday closest to 11 July (the date of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Truce). First instituted in 1986, the National Day of Commemoration aims at "commemorating all those Irishmen and Irishwomen who died in past wars or on service with the United Nations" (Government of Ireland, 2021). It therefore, in a very non-offensive and Irish way, potentially accommodates *an*y Irish soldier or civilian who died *anywhere*, from Clontarf in 1014 to Fontenoy in 1745 to Normandy in 1944.

To remain cynical for a moment, the event might even accommodate Irish people who died fighting on the side of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in recent conflicts, such as 'Khalid Kelly' (Reynolds, 2019). Terence Kelly, as he was born, was an Irishman from the Dublin Liberties who killed himself in a suicide bomb attack in Iraq in November 2016 while fighting for ISIS. He was one of perhaps 40 such fighters who left from Ireland to fight with terrorist and anti-western groups in the recent past (Lally, 2016), many of them presumably Irish citizens. The National Day also, technically, accommodates Irish soldiers in the British Army who may have fought against the Irish Volunteers in Dublin 1916, those fighting with with Franco in 1936 or with British forces in Derry in 1972. Indeed, this point was a bone of contention when the event was inaugurated at Dublin's Garden of Remembrance in 1986, drawing complaints from the Old IRA Association, who argued that the Garden designed by Dáithí Hanley to be "dedicated to the memory of all those who gave their lives in the cause of Irish freedom" (OPW, 2021) was supposed to commemorate only those who had died for Ireland (RTÉ, 1986).

It seems obvious that the spirit – if not the word – of the National Day could hardly stretch to accommodate the memory of those Irish who, as individual exceptions, may have fought for causes completely at odds with Irish core values, such as ISIS. Nevertheless, such values have been seen to change over time. A clear example of such ambivalence was the 2012 pardon afforded by the Minister of Defence to Irish personnel who deserted from the DF during the Emergency/Second World War period. Quite apart from the fact that the narrative assumed (without evidence) that the circa 5,000 men who deserted all went on to join the Allied forces (Michael, 2012; Kelleher, 2012) it was surprising that a state which has remained avowedly neutral should retrospectively decide that desertion of personnel from its own forces, in time of war and severe risk to the State, to fight with a belligerent force was something to be commended. The Irish State of today is far more accommodating and magnanimous in terms of its inclusiveness in commemoration, as we have seen, but it remains ambivalent. How does Ireland, therefore, define the limits of what is politically or morally acceptable in terms of commemoration? Or is pragmatism perhaps more highly valued than principle in the Irish context?

Aside from living State commemorative events, the presence or absence of the NA war dead in the material culture of Ireland's commemorative landscape can tell us much. We shall explore this topic more completely in the next chapter, but suffice to say that the only physical State memorials for the NA war dead are located at Dublin's Merrion Square and Glasnevin cemetery. The former location is of significance, since it is located directly across from Leinster House Lawn, the site of the original Collins-Griffith-O'Higgins 'cenotaph'. Officially entitled *An Dún Cuimhneacháin,* the National Memorial by artist Brian King in Archbishop Ryan Park at Merrion Square is again dedicated rather loosely as "The National Memorial to members of the Defence Forces who died in the service of the State" (Pegum, 2021). There is no accompanying inscription to indicate *who* died and *in what conflict* they were fighting. Glasnevin therefore holds

the only designated national site for commemoration of the NA war dead, at the cemetery's so-called 'Army Plot', but again without any explicit reference to the Civil War, where the State suffered by far its largest casualties.

Finally in this brief survey of the Irish commemorative landscape vis-à-vis the NA war dead, we turn to the DF itself. Within the organisational culture of the DF, it is striking to note how little room there is for commemoration of the Civil War dead. During the month of November each year, Masses are offered in garrison Churches around the country to remember those who have died in service, in keeping with Christian (All Souls' Day) and western military tradition. However, the official Defence Forces "Roll of Honour" exclusively takes into account those who died on UN Peacekeeping Operations (DF, 2021; Office of the Head Chaplain, 2021): there is no reference to the far greater number of fallen in the Civil War – or even to those who died during the Emergency/Second World War for that matter. Nor, contrary to what one might expect, is there any single location where one can view an entire list of DF personnel who died on operations since the State's foundation. This may well be because of the fact that the prevailing strategic culture within Ireland has cultivated a uniquely Irish version of what its armed forces are supposed to do, based on a notional "military neutrality" (DoD, 2019, p. 1), what O'Halpin (2000, p. 353) describes as "that most convenient, malleable and inexpensive of doctrines". What has been described as Ireland's policy of constructive ambivalence when it comes to foreign and defence policy (Tonra, 2012) is perhaps also reflected in Irish political culture and in turn how historical events (such as Irish desertions from the DF during the Emergency) are perceived. The official Roll of Honour demonstrates that UN operations have in some measure defined the Army's operations and represent a safe space for commemoration, while the narrative around the Civil War has all but precluded any mention of the proportionately far higher losses there. While later politically inconvenient, it is impossible to ignore the fact that those who fought and died on the NA side in 1922-23 were fighting for the State, "as a national military force under the control of a civilian government" (O'Halpin, 2000, p. 27).

Internally within the DF, there are some limited exceptions to the general amnesia around the NA war dead – for example the dedication on the memorial outside the garrison Church in Cathal Brugha Barracks reads "to the eternal memory of those members of the National Army / Defence Forces based in Cathal Brugha Barracks who died in the service of their country" (Pegum, 2006). Similarly, the artefacts of military material culture in DF locations, which are most prominently enshrined in Messes, are almost exclusively limited to iconography (principally in portraits, stained glass, fragments of uniform and brass plaques) of figures such as Collins; Mulcahy; McKee; Mellows; Aiken and Brugha. These encompass both sides of the Treaty divide, but are all decidedly removed from any memory of Civil War losses by the organisation, unless it is the death of General Michael Collins. Taking Schein's three-layered paradigm for understanding organisational culture, it could be argued that these religious ceremonies and artistic objects constitute Schein's (2004) definition for artefacts or even espoused values, but a core underlying assumption would appear to be one that deliberately precludes any reference to the Civil War.

Commemoration of the anti-Treaty war dead in Ireland

As with the British forces comparison, a brief examination of the Irish commemorative landscape as it pertains to the anti-Treaty war dead reveals some interesting comparisons. There are many memorials for the anti-Treaty side, managed in a systematic way by local organisations and most prominently by the National Graves Association, which was formally established in 1926 and has "erected, or accepted to be placed in their care, in excess of 500 Memorials and Wayside Shrines

in the 32 counties of Ireland" (National Graves Association, 2020). In general terms, "republicanism has its *Last post* [sic], its proud lists of patriot dead, its own literature of memory" (Dolan, 2006, p. 3). As alluded to above, Glasnevin cemetery functions as something of a national memorial and includes a dedicated republican plot. Similarly, there are hundreds of monuments and plaques commemorating battles and deaths for the Irish republican side during the War of Independence and the 1916 Rising. This contrasts sharply with the silence and amnesia around the NA war dead. Could it be said that the anti-Treaty forces may have lost the war, but won the commemoration? Should inclusive commemorations not seek to include all sides, beyond the simplistic narratives that Fitzpatrick (2014) has cautioned about?

History, moral intensity and ethical remembering

It can be argued that Irish Civil War narratives have perhaps been informed by a moral value judgement on who ought or ought not to be commemorated, based on received knowledge about who was 'good' and who was 'bad'. War is never pretty and the atrocities committed by the NA at places such as Ballyseedy are unforgiveable. The danger here however, to quote Fitzpatrick, is that "commemoration lends itself to crude stereotyping" and not all 40,000 members of the NA can be "portrayed as bloodthirsty perpetrators of the Ballyseedy massacre" (Fitzptrick, 2013, p. 217).

The calculation of casualties can be a difficult business (O'Halpin & O' Corráin, 2020). One primary source at Military Archives (Office of the Head Chaplain, 1923) shows that alongside the hundreds killed in action, were those who died in perhaps more tragic circumstances, such as in accidental shootings and suicides. If we can usefully agree that no one side has the monopoly on violence, we should not be afraid to offer at least some informed judgement on what happened, in order that "historians should try to add moral intensity to the ways in which we commemorate and comprehend the past" (Fitzptrick, 2013, p. 218). O'Toole (2014) would seem to chime with this argument, suggesting that historians "can be said to serve society much better by confronting it with the unadorned evidence of the human costs of conflict" (O'Toole, 2014, pp. 157).

Unfortunately, for each Ballyseedy, there was usually a Knocknagoshil, the latter event involving the death of five NA soldiers in a 'trap mine' and leaving Pte Joseph O'Brien with severe sight loss and a double leg amputation (MSPC, 1923). For the 77 people brutally executed by the State in an attempt to suppress the anti-Treaty movement, there were an (as yet) unquantified number of executions by anti-Treaty forces (O'Halpin, 2000). The problem, of course, is that State actors in uniform are immediately identifiable and (rightly) held to the highest standards of conduct, whereas misconduct by asymmetric forces is often not. The degree to which asymmetric operations in the War of Independence and the Civil War had less to do with political ambition and more to do with sectarian violence and score-settling against non-combatants is an uncomfortable aspect of our history and merits further examination. Historians such as Borgonovo (Bielenberg, et al., 2014), for example, have detailed extraordinary episodes of violence such as the extra-judicial killing of thirteen Protestants in the Bandon Valley by IRA forces in April 1922, while Clark (2014) has attempted to grapple with the phenomenon of 'everyday violence' – including gender based sexual violence – in the Civil War which had lasting and traumatic effects, even if not lethal ones (Clark, 2014). Such activity also included the economic deprivation associated with the destruction of railways and road infrastructure and acts of cultural vandalism such as the burning of great Anglo-Irish houses and the deliberate destruction of the Public Record Office (Crowe, 2016).

The above comments are not to somehow retrospectively tip the balance of violence and atrocity against the anti-Treaty forces, but rather to argue that it is simplistic to presume that the NA forces were likewise most guilty. The point is that only accurate, rigorous research and a strict interpretation of the sources can inform our historiography, which in turn ought to inform our commemorative activities in a morally sound and balanced way. Moreover, it is interesting to reflect on the degree to which the conduct of the official executions by NA firing squads (as opposed to NA outrages in places like Kerry) was state sanctioned and driven in the main not by soldiers, but by elected members of the Third Dáil, notably Ministers O'Higgins and Hogan (O'Halpin, 2000). Ironically, their successors in Fianna Fáil would later mete out executions to IRA convicts in 1940 (O'Halpin, 2000). While it may be convenient to account for the phenomenon of State-sponsored violence purely by reference to a blunt and bloodthirsty military instrument, it is perhaps a little too convenient to forget that democratically elected members of national parliament were the ones who repeatedly ordered official executions to take place. These facts need to be accounted for in our historiography and a balanced consideration given as to how they might be commemorated. Ultimately, the NA war dead might have died to fulfil the political compromise of the nascent new state, but their death and commemoration became something of an inconvenience. Dolan's thoughts on the matter are very pertinent and sum up the issue succinctly:

> How does a mother, a father, a wife remember their private, their brigadier general, their son or husband killed in the street, shot by mistake, when they have died in the wrong war, against the wrong enemy and when the next government looks on them as traitors? Can a father still say his son died for Ireland when he had died to secure a compromise? (Dolan, 2006, p. 4)

Today, as for most of the twentieth century, the NA soldiers who died, with the exception perhaps of the rather understated 'Army Plot' in Glasnevin, are not commemorated, not even internally within the DF. At national level, the commemorative ceremonies for the Irish State's own war dead still reflect ambivalence and compromise, perhaps proving the point that in commemorating everyone in general, we commemorate no-one in particular. The Irish State may not always be very good at commemorating its war dead, but, ironically, it is better at commemorating those who served in the forces of its near neighbours than it is at commemorating those who served in its own. This would appear to contradict the notion of ethical remembering referred to earlier, as set forward by President Higgins (2020), who states that:

> Amnesia will not help us. I believe that we, and those who are part of the discourse with us, must remember in full […] with a willingness to hear the stories that might prove less comfortable, and give space to the perspectives that might challenge each other. (Higgins, 2020).

In the next section, we shall consider commemorative material culture in Ireland and how an understanding of that cultural context may help to gain a clearer understanding of why the NA war dead are not commemorated in Ireland.

PART TWO – Commemoration and Material Culture

Hence learn, whenever, in some unhappy day,
you light on the ruins of so great a mansion,
of what worth he was who built it,

and how frail all things are,
when such memorials of such men cannot outlive misfortune

(Anon, *Houses of the Oireachtas*, 1745).

Material culture, cultural history and its uses

The historian of commemoration needs to be especially careful of bias. In its Second Statement, the EAG argues for a more inclusive type of history and commemoration than academic historiography has traditionally allowed for, thus seeking to have a focus "no longer exclusively on political history but also on social, cultural, class and gender history" (EAG, 2017, pp. 5-6). Similarly, Dolan (2006) has pointed out that in examining aspects of Civil War commemoration, each discipline brings its own bias. Hence art historians critical of the (first) Leinster Lawn Cenotaph's design may see only "an expression of narrow Roman Catholicism" in the Gaelic revival-inspired cross, while "just as guilty, the historian seeks context and all that he sees is the election [the General Election to the Fourth Dáil of 27 August 1923] that lurks in the background" (Dolan, 2006, pp. 10-11). Given, as we have seen, that commemoration is not only difficult to define in practice, but subject to political and historiographical manipulation, it seems clear that a broader, cross-discipline approach to historiography is required for commemoration, to include the work of cultural historians. This chapter will examine commemoration in Ireland through the lens of material culture, in order to better understand the Irish State's attitude towards the NA war dead. The two most prominent monuments will be considered: the Army Plot at Glasnevin and the successive Cenotaphs on Leinster Lawn. We shall then examine to what extent the two Cenotaphs may be considered representative of the Irish approach towards commemoration. Finally, we shall consider some counter arguments, with a particular focus on the legitimacy of forgetting and of finding neutral ground.

O'Toole (2014) argues that commemoration "is a matter of choice. It is not essentially about history – it's about culture […] ideas of the 'historic' that are always shaped by present-day concerns and power structures" (O'Toole, 2014, p. 154). Furthermore, according to O'Toole "…there is nothing especially Irish about contested memory" (O'Toole, 2014, p. 154), it is a phenomenon encountered in many countries. The field of cultural history can enrich our understanding of such contested commemorative landscapes. In this context Winter's work (2009, 2014) is especially important, focussing as it does on material culture in war and the interplay between memory and cultural objects. For Winter, "war memorials mark the spot where communities were reunited, where the dead were symbolically brought home, and where the separations of war, both temporal and external, were expressed, ritualized, and in time, accepted" (Winter, 2009, p. 98). Winter (2014) has also elaborated on how mourning as expressed in the visual arts, most often in stone monuments of both secular and religious nature, is essentially a different mode to mourning through prose and poetry. This type of historiography offers a case study in why the work of cultural historians ought to be taken into account alongside more traditional positivist history writing.

Far from being somehow disconnected from commemoration in the most public sense of the term, Jeffrey reminds us of the importance of material culture in the Irish commemorative landscape, pointing out that "…the two decades between the end of the First World War and the outbreak of the Second were ones of widespread and active commemoration, culminating with the construction of an Irish National War Memorial park at Islandbridge…" (Jeffrey, 2014, p. 117). Material culture, however, is clearly different between communities and traditions on the island of Ireland in how they have commemorated their war dead – even those from the same side, fighting in the same war. The differences in monumental material culture surrounding the Great

War between north and south are stark and for Jeffrey, a missed opportunity, since "an appreciation of the complex and subtle range of meanings which could be drawn from the common tragic experience of the war was overwhelmed by a simple patriotic and predominantly Protestant type of commemoration" (Jeffrey, cited in Turpin, 2007, p. 118).

As we have seen, Irish communities and indeed the State (at least prior to the Second World War) engaged in public acts of commemoration along lines which were very much redolent of the wider commonwealth model. Islandbridge was designed by the same architect, Edwin Lutyens, who designed the London Cenotaph and the Thiepval memorial. Lutyens held at the heart of his greatest work the notion of “elemental mode” of simplicity, reminiscent of Ancient Greek geometric forms but stripped of any triumphalism or religious connotation, allowing the broadest possible reach to those who came to the sites to remember (Winter, 2009, p. 102). Even where religious symbolism does exist on war graves, Winter points out that most commemorative art referred to Christian iconography in “a search for solace and meaning”, rather than an accusation or assertion of the moral triumph of those commemorated (Winter, 2009, p. 92). The material culture of large Great War memorials in Ireland was therefore highly inclusive rather than exclusive.

The monumental but decidedly secular memorials designed by Lutyens contrast sharply with the blood-sacrifice iconography around the 1916 Rising in Ireland, encapsulated in notions of the ancient and heroic in objects such as Oliver Sheppard’s 1936 *The Death of Cúchulainn* or Brian Hanley’s 1966 Garden of Remembrance. Turpin (2007, p. 107), states that “generally speaking, the independence memorials are to be found in the Free State and underline an heroic foundation narrative”, which differ from the commemorative tradition in Northern Ireland; one which emphasises the sacrifice of the Great War and connects to the wider commemorative tradition of the United Kingdom.

There is a tension here however. By far the most impressive war memorial in Ireland, in scale, design and impact is the War Memorial at Islandbridge. Turpin argues that Islandbridge is “the finest World War I memorial in the South, finer, in fact, than any of the War of Independence memorials” due in large part to Lutyens’ own ability (Turpin, 2007, p. 117). How is it then, that in Ireland, where a war of independence was fought against the British Army, where attempts at conscription in 1918 precipitated a political crisis and a landslide victory for the then Sinn Féin party, that the State’s monuments to the dead of its own forces, to those who essentially ensured its survival as a political entity, are so much less impressive? We cannot ascribe political motive to soldiers in the NA, but commemoration is usually the way in which the State acknowledges what Winter calls a “sense of indebtedness” in the soldier-state covenant (Winter, 2014, p. 95). In the UK and Ireland this is manifestly clear within that ‘other’ tradition – the CWGC. Tradition can of course be invented to suit such purposes, as Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) have shown and early Great War commemorations were no exception. Horne outlines how rituals within the wider European cultural sphere, such as the two minutes’ silence and the honouring of the unknown soldier were invented in the post Great War period to help societies as a way of acknowledging the debt and to come to terms with the scale of the losses (Horne, 2014). Irish State commemoration in the twentieth and twenty first centuries however, took few such liberties, choosing rather to ignore the NA dead.

Irish commemorative material culture 1– The Army Plot at Glasnevin

Turning to consider just how the State ignored the NA war dead, we shall examine the State’s two most prominent sites for Civil War commemoration: The Irish National Army Memorial (known more commonly as ‘the Army Plot’) and the Leinster Lawn Cenotaph. The Army Plot in

Glasnevin consists of a modest lawn and cement platform edged in stone with the names of some 130 soldiers inscribed. The small, simple plaque – erected only in 1967 – reads "To the memory of deceased officers and men of Oglaigh na hEireann [sic]". Records at Military Archives show that consideration for the "purchase & maintenance of a plot of ground in Glasnevin Cemetery for the burial of deceased soldiers" dates to September of 1923 (Army Finance Office, 1923 b). Interestingly, the Army Finance Office had, six months earlier, sought the purchase of a plot at Grangegorman cemetery (near present-day McKee Barracks) "to be used for burial of ex British soldiers" and maintained by the Office of Public Works (Army Finance Office, 1923 a). Considering its function, the Army Plot is uninspiring, unremarkable and, at time of writing, in a poor state of repair.

Dolan's work (2006) on the commemoration of the NA war dead is a key piece in the literature and pulls few punches when it comes to an assessment of how the State viewed its war dead. Specifically referencing the Army Plot, she has argued convincingly that the dead soldiers of the Free State were poorly treated, even before the so-called mutiny of 1924, when "commemoration was no longer useful" for the State's political purposes. (Dolan, 2006, pp. 125-6)' Dolan (2006, p. 126) also points out that while the Fianna Fáil administration which later dominated Irish politics for much of the century may at least have had an "excuse" not to commemorate the "obstinate rank and file of opposition", of their old Civil War enemy, the pro-Treaty parties (Cumman na nGaedheal and later Fine Gael) had few if any such excuses in not erecting some kind of State monument to the State's war dead, "…especially when £50,000 flowed to Islandbridge, when £25,000 was readily allotted to the care of British military graves that held the bodies of 1919 to 1921's enemies" (Dolan, 2006, p. 126). Dolan may be a little unsympathetic here; the National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge serve, as we have seen, to commemorate some 35,000 Irishmen, perhaps most of them former Irish/National Volunteers from that movement's numerical heyday in late 1913. Moreover and contrary to the popular idea of amnesia regarding Irish service in the British forces during the War, the project had wide support, including from Cumman na nGaedheal and Fianna Fáil (its construction spanning the 1932 handover of power) and there was a deliberate gesture to employ both British Army and Irish Army ex-servicemen as labourers (Gibney, 2021). Nevertheless, her point is well made: in terms of cultural memory and amnesia, "Islandbridge has been considered exceptional, when no-one has cared to examine what was the norm" (Dolan, 2006, p. 2). The Irish State was, from the beginning, conspicuous in its failure to provide anything approaching a meaningful commemorative monument for the NA war dead.

The only notable exception of course, was General Michael Collins' grave at Glasnvein Cemetery, which as Dolan (2006) highlights, fitted neatly with the hero-worship that Collins' memory garnered on all sides. This clearly relates to the point raised above about heroic rather than participatory commemoration in Ireland (Turpin, 2007). In some measure, Collins was perhaps convenient in the sense that his loss was universally felt and his almost mythical presence allowed for a public place of memory, while the many rank and file dead pointed perhaps to a rather more inconvenient legacy. Dolan underlines, however, the rather sordid way in which financial provision for the digging and maintenance of the graves was the subject of much scrutiny by civil servants in the Department of Finance, the graves eventually being filled four bodies deep to save on money, with a grudging allowance of £50 per annum and the dedication plaque reading only being unveiled in 1967 (Dolan, 2006). Again, the contrast with the Islandbridge memorial only five kilometres to the south is startling, while in 2014 the State could afford to spend €20,000 renovating a Celtic cross for Irishmen who fought for France near the 1745 battlefield of Fontenoy, some 269 years later (McGarry, 2020). Even at local level, memorials to the NA war dead do not feature very strongly. A prominent grass-roots project on

Irish War memorials across the various traditions, which boasts some fifty contributors, lists only 226 instances of individual memorials to NA war dead in Ireland, the vast majority of these being one-line inscriptions at the Army Plot (Pegum, 2021).

Irish commemorative material culture 2 - The Cenotaph on Leinster Lawn

The cultural history of the Cenotaph on Leinster Lawn (the garden to the rear of Leinster House, Dublin, present-day location of the Houses of the Oireachtas) is a revealing study in Irish attitudes to the commemoration of the Civil War and worth exploring in some detail here. A 'cenotaph' is, quite literally, an 'empty tomb' and is a prominent feature in western and especially British Commonwealth military remembrance. Irish attitudes in the early years of the Free State towards the construction of a cenotaph for the Great War dead are revealed in some interesting debates at both houses of the Oireachtas, including the suggestion that part of Merrion Square should be given over to the construction of a cenotaph mirroring the one designed by Lutyens at Whitehall in London. Senator W.B. Yeats, for example, was quite vocal in seeking to downplay the public acts of commemoration that might attend Armistice Day at the proposed cenotaph, stating in 1927 that:

> I do not think we should take too seriously the interests, the fancies or desires of even those admirable men who want a great demonstration upon Armistice Day. Armistice Day will recede. (Houses of the Oireachtas, 1927).

Other prominent politicians asserted that it would not be appropriate for such a memorial to be located near the centre of the new State's administration, with Minister Kevin O'Higgins remarking in 1927 that a juxtaposition of such a monument next to the Houses of the Oireachtas would not be appropriate, since "the State has other origins" (O'Higgins cited in Dolan, 2006, p. 40).

While the idea for a cenotaph for the Great War dead on Merrion Square would eventually give way to the construction of the National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge from 1931, Merrion Street had by then at any rate another cenotaph. This Leinster Lawn cenotaph was first erected in August of 1923, shortly after the end of the Civil War, to commemorate the death of General Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith a year previous. It was therefore decidedly pro-Treaty in character from the outset. The cenotaph as it first existed was the creation of George Atkinson, Professor of the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, a highly regarded artist with a broad range of work, including some iconic paintings of the State's Ardnacrusha 1925-29 hydro-electric scheme (Crawford Art Gallery, 2021), who later became Director of the National Gallery. Contemporary records show it was in the shape of a Celtic cross, made not of granite or Portland stone or even limestone as one might have expected, but rather of wood and cement (National Library, c. 1925). In this respect, it mirrored Lutyen's London Cenotaph, which was also made of temporary materials in time for the first 'victory parade' in July 1919 (Greenberg, 1989). The London Cenotaph was rebuilt in Portland stone a year later however, with some slight modifications, while the Collins Griffith memorial would eventually deteriorate before being replaced. The Leinster Lawn Cenotaph included 'medallions' (in plaster painted to look like bronze) of Collins and Griffith by Albert Power RHA, an artist who had trained at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art under such tutors as Oliver Sheppard and William Orpen and who worked in a figurative academic realist style (Bhreathnach-Lynch, 2019). Power was responsible for many of the States early monumental works and was commissioned for prominent memorials on both sides of the Civil War divide in its aftermath, including a bust of Michael Collins and one of Liam Lynch.

The Cenotaph as representative of the Irish approach towards commemoration?

The 1932 handover of power to de Valera's Fianna Fáil government was a moment of some trepidation for the Cumann na nGael administration, representing as it did the ceding of political power from the pro-Treaty victors of the Civil War to the losing anti-Treaty side. One source preserved in Military Archives (Bureau of Military History, 1932) points to an official government order directing wholesale destruction of records from the Civil War that took place on the eve of the handover, including records such as "Intelligence Reports"; "Proceedings of Military Courts" and "Reports on and details of executions in the 1922-23 period". It is perhaps unsurprising then, that a cenotaph which commemorated solely the pro-Treaty leaders - Griffith, Collins and later O'Higgins (who was added after his death in 1928) – should have fallen foul of the new administration.

According to Jordan (2007), the original cenotaph had largely deteriorated by the late 1930s and was finally dismantled in 1939 by de Valera's administration, with the agreement of Fine Gael. It was agreed that a permanent structure be commissioned by the government. As early as 1940, a new design had been developed by Fine Gael (in opposition at the time) and formally agreed, but the Emergency/Second World War effectively precluded any movement. The new Cenotaph would not be constructed until Costello himself became Taoiseach in 1948 and commissioned the artist Raymond McGrath to carry out the work a year later (Jordan, 2007). McGrath was a highly successful Australian-born architect who had worked extensively in England and had emigrated to Ireland after the Second World War, becoming chief architect of the Office of Public Works (OPW). McGrath was a "modern master" with "a belief in the 'evolutionary' path of design" (IAA, 2021). Mc Grath's new Cenotaph consisted of a 60-foot tall obelisk in granite, capped by a gilded bronze flame of *An Claidheamh Solais* (the sword of light, linked with the Gaelic revival nationalist tradition), with the three medallions for Collins, Griffith and O'Higgins now set onto a circular plinth. Contemporary Dáil debates between speakers such as Fianna Fáil's Harry Colley and Fine Gael's Patrick Palmer (Dáil Debates, 1950) show familiar arguments drawn on party lines, but also a concern that the erection of an elaborate replacement to the original cenotaph would open old civil war wounds.

Like its predecessor, the location for the Cenotaph on Leinster Lawn was ironically set on public grounds (outside the national parliament buildings) yet for all practical purposes was very much removed from the public gaze. Unlike its predecessor, the Cenotaph would not become a centre for noisy state ceremonial activities – there is little record of any such commemorations taking place since 1950. This irony in the setting of what is ostensibly a public monument of commemoration, what Winter calls "a framework and legitimation of individual and family grief" (Winter, 2009, p. 93) points again to the ambivalence in the Irish commemorative landscape, this time reflected concretely in the material culture around commemoration. What could have been a public memorial to the Civil War dead became, in both its iterations, an effectively private pro-Treaty monument, perhaps underlining the tensions that Deputy Colley was referring to in the Dáil. Moreover, the Cenotaph, far from adhering to the western tradition of an empty tomb representing the graves of many others, was a deliberate homage instead to the heroic, to 'great men' - in this case Collins, Griffith and latterly O'Higgins. The NA war dead, those who ultimately fought and died to secure the political objectives of the new Free State, are nowhere to be seen. By 2015, contemporary accounts show that the "93rd annual commemoration" for Collins and Griffith (O'Higgins is apparently left out) were still being held within Fine Gael tradition, with ceremonial involvement of the Defence Forces, albeit at the graves of Griffith and Collins within Glasnevin, not at the Cenotaph on Leinster Lawn (Edwards, 2015).

Both the Army Plot at Glasnevin and the Leinster Lawn Cenotaph, then, would seem to reinforce the ambivalence and inconsistency around the State's approach to commemoration of the NA war dead. Dolan (2006) has posited that the State had overwhelmingly political reasons for the initial construction of the Cenotaph. Disappointingly, she argues, these reasons had more to do with self-justification and positioning for power as the new establishment than they did with a genuine desire to remember Collins, Griffith or O'Higgins. Winter (2009), commenting on the changing nature of commemorative material culture, notes that European war memorials which were initially sites of mourning may develop over time to become rather sites of memory, as those who were bereaved fade away. In the case of the Irish Cenotaphs, Dolan (2006) concedes that there was some immediate outpouring of private grief and remembrance among politicians and soldiers who had served with these idealised leaders. Citing the profusion of gratitude to the Army in Dáil speeches by Deputy Seán Milroy and others on the eve of the Cenotaph's opening, Dolan (2006, p. 14), goes so far as to say that the Cenotaph could be taken, at least initially, to include "the rank and file of the Army".

This is perhaps a little optimistic. While it is true that no evidence survives regarding any decision to *deliberately omit* reference to the Free State's war dead on the Cenotaph, the omission nevertheless is there, not just once, but twice – on both Cenotaphs. It can be argued here that the State's mediocre attempts to erect and to maintain anything approaching a fitting monument, despite multiple opportunities across the decades and despite proving the capability to do so magnificently at Islandbridge, are proof enough. Moreover, the decision to make the Cenotaph a political instrument representing solely the pro-Treaty side was only reinforced by including O'Higgins after his death in 1927, a figure long hated by the republican side for his uncompromising policy on executions in particular (Ferriter, 2015). If the Cumman na nGaedheal government could afford to be so provocative on the one hand, why did it omit any dedication to those who had died to secure the new state? Applying Winter's (2009) paradigm to Ireland, it seems clear that the absence of a memorial – any memorial – for the wives, parents, children and comrades of the war dead effectively robbed that cohort of any opportunity for private mourning. In terms of mourning turning to memory there is a similar absence. Coupled with the fact that the State did not see fit to erect even a plaque at the Army Plot in Glasnevin until 1967, much less fund its maintenance to any degree of satisfaction right up to the present day, the silent witness of the surviving material culture does indeed begin to speak volumes.

Compromise and common ground

In many ways it is difficult to see how the new State, with all of its contradictions and tensions, from partition; to the civil war political split; to severe economic challenges, could have dealt comprehensively and fairly with the bitter events of the war. The fact that commemorations took place in the 1920s at all, as we have seen (albeit to the memory of the 'great men' rather than to the NA war dead) is in some ways remarkable in itself. In this respect, the commemoration of Ireland's Civil War has been not just ambivalent or partial, but 'messy', with a multitude of unresolved questions and compromise solutions that are perhaps part and parcel of statehood and nation building. The political context in the 1920s and indeed for much of the twentieth century was very difficult and any attempt at State building post war could not afford triumphalism. Taking up the arguments made by Deputy Patrick Palmer in 1950 (Dáil Debates, 1950), it can also be argued that the best form of acknowledgment, albeit short of commemoration, was practical assistance with a view to a brighter future. In this regard, the enormous effort that the State put into the awarding of pensions to ex-NA soldiers and their dependents (and ultimately to anti-Treaty war of independence fighters too) through the 1924

and subsequent Military Service Pensions Acts (Military Archives, 2021) was a very practical recognition in a poverty stricken, austere Ireland.

It can perhaps be offered that the relatively smooth transition to democracy once the war ended in 1923 and again after some trepidation as the losing side took power in 1932 were surely achievements worth protecting. In this context, funding the National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge and focussing on commemorating the 1916 Rising (the first commemorative medals were minted for the 25th anniversary in 1941) was far more palatable than picking at wounds that had barely healed over. Ironically, it was in many ways easier to commemorate the Irish who died in the Great War – in France or Gallipoli – than those who died in Dublin or Cork. Islandbridge was perhaps part of bridge building for Irish governments of both persuasions throughout the twentieth century, foretelling a drive towards reconciliation that President McAleese would later describe as "building bridges", the theme for her (first) Presidency (Office of the President of Ireland, 1997). More cynically, the campaign to build a memorial such as at Islandbridge was in any case well led and well-funded from the outset by an Anglo-Irish elite, and there were therefore "influential people to impress" (Dolan, 2006, p. 202) by successive governments, if perhaps not in public.

Was the finding – and holding – of this common ground much more important than appropriate commemoration for the NA war dead? There are no immediate answers to this question. In the next section, we shall explore how the Civil War in Spain was commemorated in material culture, and whether there are any comparative insights to be gained there for the Irish experience.

PART THREE – Commemoration of Civil War in Spain and Ireland

> … *let us wipe from their minds the memory of the slaughter of sons and brothers. Let them be friends as before and let peace and plenty prevail* –Zeus, in Homer's *Odyssey* (Rieu, 2003, p. 323).

The Commemoration of Ireland's Civil War in comparative context

The Irish Civil War of 1922-23 was, by any standards, a 'small war'. While some historians (O'Halpin & O' Corráin, 2020) are attempting to estimate how many people – military forces and civilians combined – died during the entire revolutionary period and reliable data is now available for the War of Independence, it seems unbelievable that a figure for the Irish Civil War has never been accurately compiled. The National Museum of Ireland (NMI, 2021) states that "more than one thousand" people died in the conflict, while Dolan (2006, p. 3) cites a range of historians who have compiled death tolls on the National Army side alone ranging wildly between 540 and 2,000 people. Ferriter (2015, p. 87) suggests 'roughly 7,500 fatalities' for the entire revolutionary period in Ireland. Of course, such calculations are never easy and the issue of quantifying casualties during a conflict can be very problematic, for example in accepting or discounting accidental shootings, post-war deaths from wounds or disease etc. (O'Halpin & O' Corráin, 2020). Nevertheless, it is quite telling that such confusion should exist almost one hundred years after the event, due in no small part to the fact the Irish Civil War has been "manipulated, underestimated, but most of all ignored" by Irish historians (Dolan, 2006, p.2).

Historians also differ regarding the extent of the war's impact. Garvin (1996, p. 45) has argued that the war, while bitter, was "rather like a large riot". Townshend (2012) points out that the war and indeed the wider Irish revolutionary period was comparatively unremarkable in the international context, in terms of the casualties during the Great War which preceded it: "the casualty list for three (or even six) years in Ireland was routinely exceeded in a single day's

fighting in France during that war" (Townshend, 2012, p. 110). That said, the trauma of civil wars is that they are more inherently divisive and destructive in a society than perhaps any other form of conflict. They therefore should not be "measured solely — or even primarily — in terms of fatalities" as Townshend argues. Moreover, the persistent focus on onset and causality has led, according to McMahon (2020, p. 15) to a tendency to "neglect to examine the underlying and sustained patterns of violence which gave the conflict much of its character". Dolan (2020), posing the question of why Ireland's revolutionary violence was so comparatively tame when it could have been far worse (in broader European terms), has similarly pointed out that even if lethal violence was limited for a variety of social and cultural reasons, this fact serves perhaps to highlight just how successful *non-lethal* forms of violence were in achieving their aims.

In this final part, we shall explore how commemoration of the National Army (NA) soldiers who died during the Civil War compares with international experience, specifically that of Spain. In parallel with the preceding part, particular attention will be given to the material culture surrounding commemoration of the war in Spain. The experience of civil war is of course not unique to Ireland. Some historians (Whelehan, 2014; Townshend, 2012) have commented on the wider phenomenon of revolution and instability across Europe in the wake of the Great War, which reverberated in Ireland as elsewhere, arguing convincingly for a transnational approach in our historiography. Similarly, Newby & Mahon (2017) argue that the current period of centenary commemorations in European countries offers us opportunities to go beyond historiography which focuses solely on "the national historical paradigm" and engage in comparative and transnational studies:

> The desire and need to develop the comparison has re-emerged now as perhaps more vital than ever as historians look to explore, in a more rigorous and sustained fashion, the comparative and transnational dimensions to political, social, cultural and economic history. In this sense, the era of commemorations has also revealed the potential for exploring the notable parallels which can be found by looking outside of the national historical paradigm and through the adoption of comparative and transnational approaches (Newby & Mahon, 2017, p. 167).

Even if Fitzpatrick (2017) has warned against an apparent obsession in the literature regarding transnational studies, which he argues essentially repackages what "Irish historians have been doing over the past half century at least" (Fitzpatrick, 2017, p. 123), studies from authors such as Whelehan (2014) and Newby & Mahon (2017), which deliberately set out to take into account the wider context of historical events, have an important contribution to make.

It is difficult to find civil war parallels to the Irish situation in Europe. Our nearest neighbours, in England at least, had alternated between kingdom and commonwealth for a decade or so during its Civil War, culminating in parliamentarian victory under Cromwell as early as 1651. The last land battle fought in Britain was at Culloden, in 1745. The clearest comparisons to the Irish Civil War, in terms of geography and chronology, are therefore the Finnish (1918) and Spanish (1936-39) civil wars. As we shall see, Spain has some spectacular - if highly contested- examples of material culture associated with the commemoration of its Civil War. For this reason, comparison with Spain only will be made here due to the confines of space. A comparative study of the Finnish war (a small, peripheral country which also suffered a nineteenth century famine and a twentieth struggle for Independence) would doubtless yield some very interesting results

also, even if the fatalities during Ireland's Civil War "were but a fraction of those in its Finnish counterpart" (Newby & Mahon, 2017, p. 173).

The Valley of the Fallen as an exercise in Spanish State commemoration

If the Irish Civil War was a comparatively small conflict, Spain's war was at the opposite end of the spectrum. Spain nevertheless offers fertile ground for comparative study, its civil war between Franco's Nationalist forces and the Republicans under Manuel Azaña taking place some 13 years after the end of the Irish Civil War. It is estimated that some 350,000 people were killed across both sides during the war (Renshaw, 2011, p. 22). When the deaths of civilians, prisoners and the effects of malnutrition and disease are taken into account, Renshaw (2011, p. 22) estimates that the figure rises to perhaps 500,000 humans. This is a colossal figure, which exceeds conventionally accepted figures for Irish deaths in the First World War (Ferriter, 2015, p. 86) by at least a multiple of ten. The Spanish Civil War has been seen as a prelude to the combined arms warfare which would be conducted during the Second World War which closely followed it, as depicted in Picasso's haunting 1937 panting *Guernica* (Leal, 2021). It was also an international conflict, attracting intellectuals such as Ernest Hemingway (author of *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* 1940) and George Orwell (author of *Homage to Catalonia,* 1938) to the Republican international brigades, while conservative Catholic elements such as the Irish Army Comrades Association (the 'Blueshirts') joined the Nationalist side for 'a short lived Crusade in Spain' (O'Halpin, 2000, p. 121). Of particular interest is how the surviving material culture in Spain reflects that country's approach to commemoration on both the Nationalist (Francoist) and Republican sides and whether or not there are any parallels which might inform our understanding of the commemoration of the NA war dead in the Irish Civil war.

A key legacy of the conflict in social and cultural terms was the construction of the massive 3,000-acre *Valle de los Caídos* (Valley of the Fallen), located near Madrid, which included, until 2019, a huge mausoleum containing Franco's grave. As a site of cultural memory, the *Valle* has been controversial since its construction, in part by forced labour (Bueno, 2013), under the Franco regime in the 1940s. While it was established ostensibly as a memorial for both sides in the conflict and some 40,000 dead from both the republican and the nationalist sides lie buried there, it has long been perceived as a place of pilgrimage for Franco supporters (Bueno, 2013). The body of Franco was exhumed from the underground basilica after a lengthy legal process in October 2019, one which highlighted a complex legacy around Franco and the Civil War which persists to this day (Minder, 2019). It could be argued that the *Valle* was a national attempt, on the grandest possible scale, to memorialise in a very one sided way a conflict that had literally and figuratively ripped the Spanish people apart in the late 1930s. As a state sponsored exercise in forced commemoration, it did nothing to heal old wounds and the existence of the memorial in its original form until today was perhaps only possible due to Franco's longevity (until 1975) and the uniquely Spanish approach to dealing with its horrific legacy. Before turning to a more detailed examination of the *Valle* itself as an object of monumental material culture, it is important that we briefly examine the political context within which the *Valle* has survived to the present day.

As it attempted to move into a new era of democracy after Franco, Spain's unique approach to dealing with the legacy of the past was encapsulated in the so-called 'Pact of Forgetting' which was underpinned by its 1977 Amnesty Law. Aguilar's (2012) work on the changing context of this law and how it effectively shifted from a law for democracy (instituted as the very first piece of legislation in the post-Franco democratic government of October 1977) to "a law for impunity" (Aguilar, 2012, p. 315) is highly relevant here. Aguilar argues that the law's provisions "made the bellicose and dictatorial past a forbidden topic of political debate",

effectively bolstering a national reconciliation policy (Aguilar, 2012, p. 318). Furthermore, in order to achieve reconciliation on which a new democracy could be built, the new administration was inextricably bound up with the terms "forgetting," "burying," "erasing," and "overcoming" (Aguilar, 2012, p. 331). Comparisons made by Aguilar to other Spanish-speaking jurisdictions with troubled pasts are revealing. Rather than implement a more comprehensive truth and reconciliation process, such as occurred in the Latin-American countries of Chile and Argentina in the 1990s, Spanish politicians agreed to 'forget' about the war in an attempt to move on, as a fundamental precondition for Spain's new democratic era (Aguilar, 2012). This was driven by a mutual understanding of the requirement to reconcile, since both sides had committed atrocities and "this created a need for mutual and reciprocal forgiveness in Spanish society that proved far more intense than the demand for justice for the dictatorship's excesses" (Aguilar, 2012, p. 317). Crucially, the key issue for Spanish society in 1977 was not so much the culpability of perpetrators of war crimes, but related rather "to the notion of ending a political conflict in which both sides committed atrocities" (Aguilar, 2012, p. 319). The notion that memory of traumatic events can effectively be suppressed in the interests of progress is an interesting one. Aguilar also draws on the work of Holmes (1993), who has likewise commented that:

> by closing the books on the past, keeping retribution for former crimes off the political agenda, the organizers of a new democracy can secure the compliance of strategically located elites– cooperation which may be indispensable for a successful transition from dictatorship to self-government (Holmes, 1993, cited in Aguilar, 2012, p. 321).

Material Culture of the *Valle de los Caídos*: a monument to defy time and oblivion

The architects of the *Valle* deliberately set out to create a monument to "defy time and oblivion" (Bueno, 2013, p. 52) and would seem to have succeeded thus far. It may not be too much of a stretch to suggest here that the political climate of tolerance in the interests of progress described above allowed monuments such as the *Valle* to persist (and indeed become reworked) rather than to be deconstructed. In other words, that the prevailing political climate is reflected in the existence – or persistence – of cultural objects connected with the events themselves.

In Spain, the *Valle* - like the Leinster Lawn Cenotaph -was an expression of the State's supremacy and legitimacy, albeit on a far grander scale. Bueno highlights two key features in the construction of the *Valle*. The first of this was the personal influence of Franco and his desire to underpin both his authority and his legacy in the construction of the complex. For Bueno, "the monument is consciously intended to glorify the victors" (Bueno, 2013, p. 62), a fact underscored by Franco's personal selection of the two architects, Pedro Muguruza and Diego Méndez, who would oversee the project during almost twenty years of construction. The second feature identified by Bueno (2013, p. 52) is "the function of the monument to represent a history". The *Valle* was deliberately intended to refer at once to the greatest traditions of Spanish imperial architecture, harking back to the El Escorial palace, and also to herald the arrival of a new period of greatness for Spain (Bueno, 2013). This period is characterised by Bueno (2013, p. 74) as a "National Catholicism which understood architecture and its aesthetics and function as a form of politics that would serve as the conceptual basis for the *Valle* de los Caídos".

Overall, the *Valle* de los Caídos was quite literally a monumental attempt to forge the identity of a nation State through sheer effort, at a cost of tens of millions of euro in today's equivalent and nearly two decades of work in austere mountain conditions (Bueno, 2013). Any latter-day attempts to reconfigure the complex as a monument for reconciliation for both sides are unfortunately scuppered by the gruesome fact that the Franco regime essentially carried out tens of thousands of exhumations from mass graves of Republican dead and "arguably, these

were forced into the crypt in order to increase the number of the entombed", without family consent, a practice that only ceased in 1983 (Bueno, 2013, p. 98).

The problem with both the Amnesty Law and the survival of the *Valle* as legacies of Franco's regime, or at least as legacies of the compromise democracy that followed it, is that neither compromise catered fully for many who had suffered during the war. Moreover, although nation-states transitioning to democracies may require 'gag-rules' as Homes (1993) has argued, hurt and repression has a way of resurfacing. For Aguilar, this is exactly what happened in Spain, since "the veil drawn over the past in the political sphere principally benefited those who had held public office under Francoism, as well as those who had actively collaborated with the dictatorship's repressive activities" (Aguilar, 2012, p. 321).

By the early 2000's the first cracks in the Pact of Forgetting were beginning to show. This was exemplified in the groundswell of interest at local level in unlocking the past through archaeological excavation. Renshaw (2011) has convincingly argued that changing cultural attitudes around the exhumation of human remains for the purposes of establishing historical truth, combined with developments in archaeological research, have informed contemporary Spanish readings of its Civil War, beyond traditional narrative accounts of what happened. As outlined above, the war had an exceptionally high casualty rate, estimated at perhaps 350,000 during the war itself, to say nothing of national excess deaths due to starvation and disease in the years that followed (Renshaw, 2011, p. 22). Given that a disproportionately high number of people were killed unofficially, away from the battlefield and often unaccounted for in the official record, Renshaw has argued for a new perspective on memory. Human artefacts, it is argued, have taken on a new significance, as "human remains appear more enduring than witness testimonies, which can be contested, and memories, which may be altered by both their retelling and their suppression" (Renshaw, 2011, p. 15).

The desire to rediscover mass graves across Spain has been especially important for the republican side, since "the dominant memory politics of Franco's regime gave public space and recognition to these [Republican] losses, while those on the losing side were marginalised and silenced" (Renshaw, 2011, p. 21). This has led to an explosion of interest in the exhumation and archaeological investigation of such mass graves since the year 2000, led by such groups as the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory - ARMH, 2021), which has collaborated with Amnesty International and gained recognition for its activities from the United Nations (Renshaw, 2011, p. 19). Beyond mere genealogy or even osteology for individual family purposes, what Aguilar (2012, p. 333) likewise describes as an "extraordinary" proliferation of exhumations of mass graves has had far-reaching consequences. The success in Spain of historical memory campaigns such as that mounted by the ARMH have had political and even legal ramifications for the country, via several formal complaints which intensified political pressure, resulting in a judicial crisis in 2008 (Aguilar, 2012) and the effective unwinding of the aspects of the 1977 Amnesty through the 2007 *Ley de Memoria Histórica* (The Law of Historical Memory) (Renshaw, 2011, p. 20). Renshaw's work is particularly important for us here, since it highlights how the *politics* of memory, far from being predictable or even diminished over time, can lead to "an irruption [sic] of memory" (Renshaw, 2011, p. 20) given the right circumstances.

Civil War in Spain and in Ireland: parallels and peculiarities

It is hard to draw any lessons for the Irish experience here. Did the post-Civil War policies of Cumann na nGael and Fianna Fáil amount to a 'pact of forgetting'? Is civil war too painful a subject to deal with, even decades on, such that forgetting is preferable to remembering? Or has the

Spanish experience ultimately shown us the folly of amnesia, of attempting to suppress memory for the sake of compromise? Perhaps there is a middle ground here, or perhaps the Spanish example is too different in scale to make any useful comparisons. After all, the Spanish conflict resulted in the deaths of up to 500,000 people, the Irish one perhaps 2,000 victims. The Spanish conflict was followed by a period of near fascist regime throughout the 1940s and autocratic rule until 1975, while the Irish conflict was followed by a remarkably smooth transition to democracy.

What appears to be a parallel in both countries is that the nation state has, across time, sought to use monumental objects of material culture to reinforce a particular agenda. In the case of the new Irish State under the Cumman na nGaedheal government, the Cenotaph on Leinster Lawn was, as alluded to in the last chapter, an exercise in political expediency. Like the *Valle*, which was consciously intended from its inception to glorify the victors (Bueno, 2013, p. 62), it was a necessary nation building tool from which the new State sought to underline its legitimacy, referring back at once (through the Celtic cross) to the Gaelic cultural revival and to Collins and Griffith as nationalist leaders with unquestioned credentials (Dolan, 2006). Such agendas can and do go wrong. In the Irish case for example, the reaction to plans to commemorate the RIC/Auxiliaries on Glasnevin's 'Necrology Wall', surprised many in the level of anger that was generated by a certain level of ordained inclusivity.

There are also peculiarities in the Irish situation that the Spanish comparison only serves to highlight. Outside of the Dáil chamber, the commemoration of the deaths of some 800 men in upholding the state (to say nothing of those Irish who died on the anti-Treaty side, or indeed the innocent civilian casualties), does not appear to have attracted any political attention at all, at least not any manifested in a desire to overtly commemorate. The *Valle* is far from perfect as a national site of commemoration, whatever the recent attempts might be to appropriate it as "a site of reconciliation between the two sides" (Bueno, 2013, p. 51). Nevertheless it is *an* attempt and it is noteworthy if only for the sheer scale of its commitment. In Ireland, conversely, there is no equivalent. The nearest that Ireland has come to such a monumental expression of commemoration is at Islandbridge, but this lies outside the State's own declared origins in terms of its revolutionary past, belonging still, as we have seen, to another tradition. As Dolan (2006, p 132) puts it, "the shame was that it [the State] never even tried". If it did, then it is difficult to find any surviving examples in the material culture. Moreover, it is very telling, as previously mentioned, that the one monument (in Glasnevin) dedicated to the National Army war dead was not even named as such until 1967. It remains distinctly underwhelming to this day.

Unlike the politics of memory in Spain, where the victors deliberately constructed the memory around the Civil War as exemplified by the *Valle de los Caídos*, the opposite seems to have occurred in Ireland – the republican tradition has been overt in its commemoration while there is almost total amnesia on the side of the State. Again, just why this may be so is not easy to ascertain. The notion of compromise to achieve political independence, albeit without the six counties of Northern Ireland, is a theme taken up consistently in Dolan's (2006) work. Compromise can have its advantages and it is perhaps too easy for the historian at a century's remove to criticise; but it also comes at a price. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, safe spaces for commemoration such as the 1916 Rising (for the State) or the deaths of UN Peacekeepers overseas (for the Defence Forces), are understandable. Nevertheless, the compromise position has meant that the NA war dead have never been included in official narratives. Their absence effectively constitutes a lack of real inclusion of the "moral intensity" that Fitzpatrick suggests (2013, p. 218), or the "unadorned evidence of the human costs of conflict" (O'Toole, 2014, pp. 156-157), both of which demand more of those who would seek to inform commemoration beyond mere compromise alone.

The relative comprehensiveness of State-sponsored commemoration in Spain may have practical explanations also. It may have much to do with the completeness of the Francoist success and the longevity of the regime until the mid-1970s. Only latterly has there been an attempt in Spain to remove overt public effigies and symbols of the Franco regime, including the exhumation of his body from the mausoleum in 2019 and the 2021 removal of the last remaining statue to Franco, in the North African territory of Melilla (El País, 2021). It may also have much to do with scale of the war and the scale of the losses in that country in human and material terms, which cannot be said in Ireland, despite a persistent national narrative around the lasting effects of so-called civil war politics. As we have seen, Spain had passed the 1977 Pact of Forgetting as a compromise to allow for a transition to democracy post-Franco; it would only begin to dismantle aspects of that pact with the 2007 Memory Law. Ireland, on the other hand, was dominated by a political culture in which perceived memory of its civil war arguably had more to do with political posturing than any genuine lived experience: "bitterness was obedient on election banners when the parties could think of no other way to reaffirm their parties' devotions" (Dolan, 2006, p. 201). Indeed, it has been a consistent feature of the prevailing political narrative in Ireland that civil war politics dominated discourse throughout the twentieth century, its totems – such as whether the portrait of Collins or de Valera should hang in the Taoiseach's office – attracting comment even to this day (Roche, 2020).

A final contrast is that the painful recollection of the Spanish Civil War concerns a conflict which still lingers in living memory and yet was far more pervasive in its violence across society. The 2007 Memory Law, instituted by a leftist government following a groundswell of interest in righting old wrongs, has been particularly contentious in the past decade precisely because the Spanish Civil war is "no longer viscerally close, nor yet distantly forgotten" (Bueno, 2013, p. 106).

Ireland it seems, has forgotten the National Army war dead and has resigned itself to accept that the compromise finally attained by the State after the Civil War may just have been worth the price.

CONCLUSION

> *He thought each memory recalled must do some violence to its origins…So be sparing. What you alter in the remembering has yet a reality, known or not.*
> (Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, p. 139).

This paper has attempted to explore the question of why Ireland does not commemorate its National Army Civil War dead. Identifying a distinct gap in the literature regarding the Irish Civil War in general and the commemoration of the NA war dead in particular, the research tackles some key assumptions regarding commemoration in Ireland. A number of conclusions can be drawn here which positively enhance our understanding of this important but much neglected corner of Irish history.

Commemoration in Ireland is ambivalent

At national level, the commemorative ceremonies for the Irish State's own war dead reflect an ambivalence about asserting the State's origins, but also highlight a tension between the different traditions in Ireland. It seems clear that the act of commemoration at state level can shift over time in both its meaning and purpose. Commemoration, as an activity reliant on history and historiography, is similarly contested. On examination of both ceremonial practices and some of the key surviving structures of monumental material culture in the Irish commemorative landscape, it is clear that there is a significant degree of ambivalence, reflecting perhaps Irelands political and strategic culture. In terms of international comparisons, Ireland shares some

similarities with the Spanish experience of its civil war, but differs significantly in how it has essentially avoided the issue. Spain, perhaps due to the sheer scale of its conflict in human terms, has come through a process of both forgetting and recovering its historical memory, with political ramifications to this day.

Commemoration in Ireland is not necessarily inclusive

This study has also clearly shown that there are inconsistencies in the Irish commemorative landscape which contradict the notion of real inclusiveness. The concept of commemoration as an inclusive activity is set out admirably by the Irish State's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) in its first (2012) and second (2017) statements. This attitude towards an authentic understanding of our past and an inclusive style of commemoration is perhaps best summed up by Taoiseach Micheál Martin's recent statement at the launching of the final stage of the decade of centenaries programme:

> Terrible atrocities took place during these years, which must be considered very carefully, grounded in the evidence of factual, authentic archival sources. Commemoration does not signify celebration and inclusivity does not imply approval of the events that took place. We all have a responsibility to continue our exploration of our past with sensitivity, curiosity and empathy; embracing all of its nuances and complexities in an inclusive and respectful manner. (Government of Ireland, 2021).

Embracing such complexities in an inclusive way is not easy however and to date the Irish State has appeared to favour pragmatism over principle. Despite the recognition by the EAG that "official events must within reason be inclusive and non-partisan, but the State should not be expected to be neutral about its own existence" (EAG, 2012, p. 1) the amnesia regarding the NA war dead would suggest that there is a lingering disconnect between the establishment of the State as a political entity and the military means by which it ensured its survival. It is noteworthy in the Irish context that in commemorating the role of the political institutions there has been almost complete amnesia regarding the military instrument. Nor was this link in the context of the Irish Civil War somehow a tenuous one – as outlined earlier some of the worst atrocities carried out by the NA, especially the execution of anti-Treaty fighters and leaders, was expressly directed from Dáil Éireann. Ultimately, the Irish Free State, faced with "a worsening military situation" (Ferriter, 2005, p. 254) could not have survived as a political entity without the willingness of soldiers to fight and die for its political aims.

Ethical remembering and the NA war dead

This paper has also advanced the notion of what the President of Ireland has called ethical remembering, noting that "what to remember, and how to remember it, carries the inescapable implication of ethics" (Higgins, 2020). The President's work echoes the challenge put forward by Fitzpatrick (2013, p. 218) to ensure that our historiography adds "moral intensity" to how we commemorate. It is suggested that the amnesia that surrounds the National Army war dead lacks moral intensity and falls short of the kind of inclusive commemoration that has rightfully managed to encompass the British Army war dead not just from the Great War, but from the revolutionary period in Ireland too. The assertion of this paper is therefore that in Ireland today, as for most of the twentieth century, the National Army soldiers who died fighting for the State are not appropriately commemorated, neither by the State, nor internally within the Defence Forces.

Areas for further study

While attempting to draw some modest conclusions, this paper has potentially raised as many questions as it has answered. The most pertinent questions which are beyond the scope of this paper but would merit further study concern firstly; commemoration and Ireland's strategic culture and secondly; comparative study with the commemoration of the Finnish Civil War.

Commemoration and strategic culture in Ireland

This paper has raised a number of questions regarding the attitude of the State since independence to the commemoration of its Civil War dead. At least some of this attitude may have its roots in the particular character or cultural reference points of Irish people viz-à-viz the military instrument and military service in general. One suggestion made here is that since Irish strategic culture is ambivalent, it is hardly surprising that commemorative culture regarding the State's own military should be likewise ambivalent. Strategic culture has been defined by Johnston (1995, p. 37) as "an integrated "system of symbols […] which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs". Perhaps the clearest example of this ambivalence, as we have seen, is demonstrated in how the State can richly commemorate the Irish who served in the British armed forces in a variety of sometimes contentious conflicts, but chooses rather to ignore or at least side-line those who served in its own forces, excepting with the UN. Moreover, it would appear that the Defence Forces itself has never really developed its own internal culture of commemoration, since there is an almost complete amnesia regarding its dead from the Civil War, from the Emergency period and from the Troubles. The explanation here is not immediately obvious- it may for example be largely explained by suggesting that the Irish State has simply followed pre-existing and pervasive modes of commemoration from the received British/Commonwealth tradition, while never taking the time to develop its own commemorative legacies and traditions due to the low status of the military in the Irish State. Further study in this area may yield some interesting results, with a direct learning outcome for the role and status of the Defence Forces and its position within the Irish State and Irish society generally.

Comparative study with the commemoration of the Finnish Civil War

Earlier in this paper, the benefit of comparative and international approaches to historiography were discussed, arguing that a strictly national paradigm or bias to the study of the Civil War would necessarily be limited. Finland, like Ireland, is a relatively small country with a small population. As a nation state on the periphery of Europe with a tragic experience of empire, Finland also suffered a nineteenth century famine and a twentieth struggle for Independence. A comparative study of the Finnish war would doubtless yield some very interesting results. The degree to which colonialism or a postcolonial mentality affected the development of both countries in their relatively recent civil wars would also be of interest, as would a thorough examination of the surviving material culture around commemoration of the civil war in both countries.

Epilogue

In January of 2020, the chair of the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations, Dr. Maurice Manning, suggested that a national memorial, potentially using the Leinster Lawn cenotaph "to all those who died in the Civil War" is under consideration (McGreevy, 2020-c). It would appear therefore that the prospect of a third iteration of the Leinster Lawn cenotaph may be at hand, perhaps this time around in a way which can finally accommodate the Civil War dead from all traditions, and none.

Meanwhile, the remains of the NA war dead at Glasnevin Cemetery continue to lie beneath a grey and uninspiring concrete platform, the inscriptions of their names slowly fading away, as if in allegory for how they have been remembered by the State which they once served. Others, not afforded the opportunity of burial in this national site, lie still in paupers' graves at various locations around Ireland (Dolan, 2006). There remains no 'roll of honour', no 'list of the dead', at State level or within the Defence Forces to counter the assertion that these men have been absolutely forgotten. In some ways perhaps, soldiers of the new Irish Free State who paid the ultimate price continued to pay it even in death. In order to secure the politics of compromise, the State needed to extract a silence from their death that would preclude any recognition, thus ironically obliging them to continue to serve in the State's interest long after they had been buried.

Please note that the views expressed in this article are those of the author alone and should not be taken to represent the views of the Irish Defence Forces, the Command and Staff School or any other group or organisation.

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