

“Permanent reminders”: digital archives and the Irish commemorative impulse.

Hannah Smyth

Introduction

In 2013, Catriona Pennell predicted that “on-line is a key space where discussion, reflection, and ‘remembering’ are going to take place” in this decade of commemorations.¹ Who could have imagined that this would become of necessity with the onset of a global pandemic and cycles of national lockdown? More than ever before, “online” and “offline” are interwoven in present and future cultures of commemoration, strongly reflected in the latest installment of the Decade of Centenaries programme.² Commemoration has been the major impulse for particular bespoke digitizations in this period of national remembrance in the Republic of Ireland, just as digitization has coded the archive as heritage for commemoration.³ The Decade of Centenaries (DoC), but especially the 1916 centenary, has also been a national identity project rooted in cultural heritage: “We will proudly present to ourselves and to the world our achievements as a Republic...expressing our individuality through our own distinctive culture and heritage, in all its diversity.”⁴ Conceived, as it has been, commemoration for “digital natives,” alongside more traditional remembrance practices, the profusion of digitization and digital history projects has been one of the defining features of the official centenary programming.⁵ “The archives” thus digitized have underpinned an historical lingua franca of the commemorations: nuance, complexity, and historical empiricism. Many of the innovations in public history and the evolving historiography of the period are founded upon the digital remediation of documentary heritage and the DoC has, notwithstanding a pandemic-driven shift online, been a highly digital experience. Releases of State-held digital archives have been aligned with key anniversaries, peaking in 2016, and arguably setting a precedent for digitization as a new ritual of commemoration in this late-modern “remembrance culture.”⁶ Examples include: the National Library’s (NLI) “Signatories” collections, the National Archives (NAI) “Decade of Centenaries” collections, *Inspiring Ireland*, and the *Dáil 100* resource. Other schema, such as the second phase of the NLI’s DoC contribution “Towards a Republic” have continued this cycle of synchronic digitizations. One report in 2018 suggested that the release of the proposed “tranches” of archives and personal papers by the NLI “may be linked to the commemoration of significant events during the remainder of the Decade of Commemorations through to 2023,” recognising a precedent set in 2016.⁷ *Beyond 2022*, a collaboration between Trinity College Dublin and the NAI, planned for completion upon the centenary of the burning of the Four Courts and the close of the official DoC timeline, represents the zenith of this archival imperative refracted through commemoration.

Proceeding as “an opportunity to focus on the development of access to historical records and primary sources from the time period,” during this decade digital archives have become part of the public experience of commemoration in a way they were not before.⁸ One archivist

¹ Catriona Pennell in Dominic Bryan et al., “Ireland’s Decade of Commemorations: A Roundtable,” *New Hibernia Review* 17, no. 3 (2013): 68.

² Government of Ireland, “Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023: 2021 Programme” (Dublin, 2021).

³ This article draws on research and findings from my doctoral thesis: Hannah Smyth, “Digital Archives and the Irish Commemorative Impulse: Gender, Identity and Digital Cultural Heritage.” P.h.D Thesis (University College London, 2021)

⁴ Government of Ireland, “Centenary Programme” (Dublin, 2015), 9.

⁵ Mike Cronin, “Irish History Online and in Real Time: Century Ireland and the Decade of Centenaries Mike Cronin,” *Éire-Ireland* 52 (2018): 272.

⁶ Emilie Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3.

⁷ Niall Murray, “Dawn of a Digital Irish Revolution as Archives Go Online,” *The Irish Examiner*, January 8, 2018.

⁸ “About,” Decade of Centenaries, accessed January 11, 2017, <http://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/about/>; “Digital archives” is a catch-all term for the lifecycle of an archival object(s), their availability online, and their

commented that the archives “have never before been so prominent in the public consciousness,” Horne declaring that the “democratisation of the archives” was critical to the success of the 2016 commemorations.⁹ The “democratisation” of history is bound to the “democratisation” of the archives and Conway is not unjustified in making the observation that “if information from analogue sources is not readily available in digital form, it simply does not exist from the perspective of the vast majority of potential users.”¹⁰ In this way, “democratization” and “access” have been used as metonyms for the digitization of heritage archives during the commemorations in the Republic. Digitization indeed “establishes the affordances of transformative access” yet many variables dictate access to digital archives beyond the moment of digitization such as, *inter alia*, copyright, internet access, long-term preservation, findability, optimization for users with disabilities, and digital literacy.¹¹ Furthermore, and where all archives are concerned, “the decision as to what ‘heritage’ is, and what is commissioned for digitisation... is not necessarily a part of this democratization.”¹²

Notwithstanding continued asymmetries, this profusion of digital archives in the centennial context has emphasized the online space as a territory for national commemoration, identity affirmation, and challenging elitist narratives and gendered historical roles. Another defining feature of this period, a growing feminist discourse has taken place as the recovery of activist women’s histories accelerated when “feminist pressure was exerted as the post-colonial Irish nation prepared for centenary commemorations of the revolution.”¹³ The digitization of certain archives has been key to the resurrection of “hidden histories” precipitated by this feminist pressure.¹⁴ The initial release but especially the digitization of the *Bureau of Military History* (BMH) “Witness Statements” from 2012 was a turning point in the acceleration of these rediscoveries, a digitization that helped to reshape 1916 in the public and scholarly imaginary prior to the centenary.¹⁵ Digital archives have therefore been, during this decade, the basis of pioneering feminist academic inquiry, which filters down through books, print and online media, museums, exhibitions, documentaries, theatre, art, and activism, reshaping histories, memories, and identities. The novel Mná 100 resource, launched in 2021, is another noteworthy juncture along the arc of this feminist turn in the decade of commemorations that was perhaps most widely commented upon throughout the 2016 centenary year.¹⁶

conservation and preservation for the future. It is used here to denote analogue archival material that has been made available online as digital surrogates, whether presented as a detailed catalogue, an online exhibition or a collection. It may also refer to born-digital material that has been archived in a digital repository, and this may be online, in the cloud, or physical hard drives. “Digitisation” is used to refer to the product, but also the act and process, of the digitising in its historical context. See: Amy Williams, “Participation, Collaboration, and Community Building in Digital Repositories” *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 39, no. 3–4 (2015): 368–76; Bonnie Mak, “Archaeology of a Digitization,” *Journal of the Association for Information Science & Technology* 65, no. 8 (August 2014): 1515.

⁹ ResearchLibrariesUK, “DCDC17 | The Easter Rising and Its Commemorative Impact - Estelle Gittins, Trinity College Dublin,” YouTube, accessed April 19, 2018,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpEel1GUxtA#action=share>; John Horne, “The Larger Canvas: 1916 and Ireland’s Great War,” in *Reflecting on a Decade of War and Revolution in Ireland 1912-1923: Historians on 1916* (Mansion House, Dublin: Universities Ireland, 2016).

¹⁰ Paul Conway, “Digital Transformations and the Archival Nature of Surrogates,” *Archival Science* 15, no. 1 (2015): 52.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Joel Taylor and Laura Kate Gibson, “Digitisation, Digital Interaction and Social Media: Embedded Barriers to Democratic Heritage,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23, no. 5 (2017): 412.

¹³ Sharon Crozier-De Rosa and Vera Mackie, *Remembering Women’s Activism*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2018), 5-6.

¹⁴ Andrew Flinn, “Archival Activism: Independent and Community-Led Archives, Radical Public History and the Heritage Professions,” *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 7, no. 2 (2011), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9pt2490x>.

¹⁵ Guy Beiner, “Probing the Boundaries of Irish Memory: From Postmemory to Prememory and Back,” *Irish Historical Studies* 39, no. 154 (2014): 302.

¹⁶ Mná 100, accessed 26 May 2021, <https://www.mna100.ie/>

Also in 2016, a group of feminist academics ran a series of roundtables and workshops at Maynooth University on “women and the decade of centenaries” and advocating an all-island approach to the commemorations. Additionally, they noted that one of the marked features of the commemorative programme so far had been “its domination by historical discourse and by historians,” echoing Bryan’s cautionary analysis of when the historian becomes “the high priest of commemoration.”¹⁷ As such, the series emphasized the need for and validity of multiple disciplinary approaches to these commemorations beyond historicism such as anthropology, literary and memory studies.¹⁸ Emphasis on the centennial digitization has indeed focused primarily on their role in supporting public history, “democratizing” access to history, and above all historical accuracy. Less present in these public proclamations and academic debates has been the archival perspective, and specifically an interrogation of the ways in which archives - specifically digital archives - shape, reshape, and instantiate Irish cultural identity through time, and the operation of power through the inviolate archive. Whilst acknowledging the undoubtedly positive aspects of digitization, Taylor and Gibbons similarly draw attention to the fact that “much of the attention given to democracy through digitisation has focussed [sic] on the ability to reach larger user numbers, rather than how the discourse itself is created and mediated.”¹⁹ And it is this mediation of commemorative archives - something of a tautology - that I wish to emphasize in this article. Though not unique in this respect, and with some exceptions, there continues to be a general lack of engagement with *archival* scholarship in Irish historical academe and pedagogy. It is the difference, as Caswell points out, between viewing “the archive” as “hypothetical wonderland”, and archives as they are actually appraised, ordered, safe-guarded, function, and (re)mediated in society.²⁰ The context already outlined – a commemorative *mal d’archive* – is perhaps ripe for greater reflection.

These digitization drives have also re-emphasized the role of access to archives in civic participation, accountability, and governance in a much broader sense, and the need for greater investment in our recordkeeping institutions, the NAI being a particularly stark example. If the years following independence were the wild-west of archival policy, successive annual reports of the NAI demonstrate a continued struggle to impress upon both government administrations and the public its national significance, as well its vital role in democratic governance, transparency, and human rights.²¹ Notwithstanding the devastating effect of the 2008 recession across the cultural sector, understaffing and underfunding of the NAI is remarked upon throughout published reports of the National Archives Advisory Council (NAAC) as far back as 1990.²² The 2011-12 report, on the eve the DoC, stated categorically: “The Council is perplexed at the lack of support to the National Archives as the primary repository of records of Government in Ireland.”²³

¹⁷ “About,” All Island Commemoration Network, accessed April 6, 2018,

<https://allislandcommemorationnetworkireland.wordpress.com/about/>; Dominic Bryan, “Ritual, Identity and Nation: When the Historian Becomes the High Priest of Commemoration,” in *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, ed. Fearghal McGarry and Richard S Grayson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 24–42.

¹⁸ “Women and the Decade of Commemorations: An All-Island Perspective,” Maynooth University, Department of English, accessed July 7, 2020. [https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/Part 1 - Róisín Higgins and Mary McAuliffe.mp3](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/Part%201%20-%20R%C3%93is%C3%ADn%20Higgins%20and%20Mary%20McAuliffe.mp3).

¹⁹ Joel Taylor and Laura Kate Gibson, “Digitisation, Digital Interaction and Social Media: Embedded Barriers to Democratic Heritage,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23, no. 5 (2017): 409.

²⁰ Michelle Caswell, ““The Archive” Is Not an Archives: Acknowledging the Intellectual Contributions of Archival Studies,” *Reconstruction. Studies in Contemporary Culture* 16, no. 1 (2016): 4, <http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/161/Caswell.shtml>.

²¹ Ailsa C. Holland, “From Louisburgh to Ladsmith: Archives in Ireland and South Africa in a Century of Conflict and Change,” in *Archives and Archivists*, ed. Ailsa C Holland and Kate Manning (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006), 132.

²² See: National Archives of Ireland, “National Archives Advisory Council Annual Reports of the NAAC,” accessed June 11, 2018, <https://www.nationalarchives.ie/what-we-do/publications/annual-reports-national-archives-advisory-council/>.

²³ National Archives Advisory Council, “Report of the National Archives Advisory Council 2011” (Dublin, 2012), 5

Excepting some high-profile examples, not so long ago, and even in the more prosperous “Celtic Tiger” years, there was little vision for the record-keeping landscape among Irish administrations. An apparent *volte face* has been performed in recent years, necessitated in no small way by the commitment to a Decade of Centenaries, with digitisation and access at the forefront of the “Historical” strand of the centenary programme. Not alone prestige digitizations but public scrutiny over abuse survivors’ access to commissions of inquiry and church records have equally pushed the nature and complexities of records to the fore in recent years in both scholarship and society. At the same time, scholars have suggested that, in reference to the incarceration of Irish women, “These centenaries offer an opportunity to reflect on the other systematic forms of violence and abuse that have marked our island and cultures during the past one hundred years.”²⁴ Unlike survivor testimonies, the versions of the past that the centenary archives allow us to reconstruct have both been rendered safe and safely in the past.

The discourse but also the digitality of the Irish commemorations have thus been a break from the past in terms of how the Irish State and heritage institutions have rendered the national story. The lens of gender has also been brought to bear upon the current commemorations by multiple external forces just as the archives have emerged as a source for historical activism. The aim of this article is to tease out the somewhat novel relationship between digitization and commemoration in the Irish context and, as a provocation, to consider the ways in which “the archives” have been narrativized as part of a discourse of “authorized” commemoration in the Republic, and as historic in their own right.²⁵ In doing so, it will draw attention to the ways in which digitizations may become an expression of national commemoration and identity in and of themselves, strengthening the established narrative even as they pluralize the past. Although I emphasize the feminisms that have been exerted on and extend out from digitized records, my goal here is not to recount the invaluable work that has and is being carried out by feminist scholars in this respect; it is to think through the contingencies of the official remembrance and digitization drives with which they have been (in the last decade) intertwined, and which have, in no small way, made possible this flourishing scholarship. However, as a vignette on the porousness of remembrance, feminism, and digital culture, this article will reflect on the reimagining of revolutionary-era archives in abortion rights campaigning, and on archiving Repeal activism.

Digitization for commemoration

In order to frame what follows, I first propose a definition of ‘digital commemorative archives’ as observed in the recent Irish context. These can be defined as digitization of heritage archives that are circumscribed by nationally or internationally significant commemorations. They are intended for commemoration and as digital legacies of national remembrance as much as they are historical sources, and these may be highly mediatized and promoted as such above and beyond a standard digitization. In addition to their evidentiary and social functions as historical or genealogical records, they may also have greater cultural legitimacy with powerful symbolic potential in (re)framing the nation and national identity at such resonant moments as nationally significant centenaries. Digital access, much more than availability alone, supports these processes. Further, as Mak contends: “Helping to embody a story that has already been deemed important, digitizations may be taken to represent a particular people’s literature or national identity.”²⁶ Although the digitization of significant Irish State archives during the commemorative period resulted in no small way from the insistence of certain historians over many years, we must also

²⁴ James M. Smith Éire-Ireland Katherine O’Donnell, Maeve O’Rourke, “Editors’ Introduction: Toward Transitional Justice in Ireland? Addressing Legacies of Harm,” *Éire-Ireland/Ireland* 55, no. 1&2 (2020): 14.

²⁵ Thomas Cauvin and Ciaran O’Neill, “Negotiating Public History in the Republic of Ireland: Collaborative, Applied and Usable Practices for the Profession,” *Institute of Historical Research*, 2017, 4.

²⁶ Bonnie Mak, “Archaeology of a Digitization,” *Journal of the Association for Information Science & Technology* 65, no. 8 (August 2014): 1517.

consider the ways in which these digitizations are narrativized and become part of the story and identity that the nation constructs for itself.

With this in mind, it is almost cliché to state that the needs of the present are ever changing, and that our commemorative practices reflect this: “Acts of commemoration are acts of appropriation, exclusion, reclamation, selective and ever-changing.”²⁷ What indeed is digitization if not an act of appropriation, exclusion, reclamation, and selection? Commemorations, like archives, are characterized more by absence than they are completeness and as such are neither ontologically “whole or imperturbable,” nor definitive in the stories they tell.²⁸ Digitization is fundamentally another form of appraisal, a valuation, one of the many “activations” of selected records.²⁹ Commemoration is also ultimately about “collective remembrance,” which Winter advocates in place of “collective memory,” as it more is akin to the *activation* of memory in performing a link with the past.³⁰ What is meant by it here is closer to “historical consciousness” and is produced somewhere between social memory (autobiographical, embodied, generational, shared) and cultural memory (mediated, intergenerational) as outlined by Assmann.³¹ Memory is social by nature, flitting constantly between different hosts and strata of social and inherited experience in order to survive. As such, “social” and “collective” memory are often conflated, and just as he frames it Beiner warns against an overly schematizing notion of memory.³² Yet there is utility in distinguishing memory forms even as we acknowledge the highly porous boundaries between them. Archives are a form of cultural memory: caches of information, “deemed vital for the constitution and continuation of a specific group and its identity” selected and stored in a liminal state and always they have the potential for activation, transfiguration, and reinterpretation.³³ Furthermore, Assmann asserts that cultural memory also relies “on various modes of education and repeated occasions for collective participation.”³⁴ Such repeated occasions include the rituals of commemoration. Social memory in turn shapes the relationship between past and present, as it reflects a “community of shared experience, stories, and memories” as well as “beliefs, values, habits and attitudes” that may be short-lived or kept alive by “symbolic forms of commemoration.”³⁵ Digitization activates certain archives and thus a particular cultural memory in new transfigurations and appraisals; in doing so it may also revive a social memory impaired by natural or political forgetting. In the case of the DoC, these archival selections are based in a national commemorative agenda and are a “symbolic form of commemoration.” The “forgetting” - or rather failure to actively remember collectively - the true extent of women who helped found and shape independent and partitioned Ireland has been blown open, propelled by digitizations that, after all, “have far more power to influence ideas of what is important than shelves of archives boxes ever did.”³⁶

Conway surveys the idea of a “secondary provenance” whereby archival collections are put online and ascribed new contexts additional to their original context of creation. In other words, that changing techno-material forms also add layers of meaning and context to a record such as

²⁷ Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, “Commemoration, Public History and the Professional Historian: An Irish Perspective,” *Estudios Irlandeses*, no. 9 (2014): 144.

²⁸ Nanna Bonde Thylstrup, *The Politics of Mass Digitisation* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2018), 23.

²⁹ Eric Ketelaar, “Cultivating Archives: Meanings and Identities,” *Archival Science* 12, no. 1 (2012): 26, 29–30.

³⁰ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (Yale University Press, 2006), 3–5; Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, “Introduction: Cultural Memory and Its Dynamics,” in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 2.

³¹ Aleida Assmann, “Memory, Individual and Collective,” *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, no. January (2006): 213–15.

³² Guy Beiner, “Making Sense of Memory: Coming to Terms with Conceptualisations of Historical Remembrance,” in *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, ed. Richard S. Grayson and Fearghal McGarry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 20.

³³ Assmann, “Memory, Individual and Collective,” 221–22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 214, 215.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 771–72.

when it is digitized.³⁷ To this we must add the cultural logic of commemoration. The “performative nature of remembrance culture,” as Pine theorizes, underpins these commemorative digitizations, extending the online space as a context for remembrance and historical identity.³⁸ The digitization of archives for commemoration, when commissioned and funded by governments, cannot, therefore, be disentangled from the shaping of identities. Official commemoration is one of many external factors that impinge upon the mandates of state-institutional archives as it is an extension of the “nation’s desire to construct itself in accordance with a particular set of values,” and has consequences for the formal identity of those institutions that have embarked on such high-profile digitization.³⁹ A particular “politics of information” is therefore at play in such digital endeavors, not least when made possible by public policy decisions that are in turn implicated in a politics of memory and commemoration.⁴⁰ Figuring as part of an already established national heritage, such novel digitization may also, as Mak cautions, be shielded somewhat from critical inquiry into their nature as acts of cultural mediation.⁴¹ To digitize for commemoration is no less a value-laden act of cultural mediation. As such, and if commemoration is indeed a framework for expanding a previously narrow definition of Irish historical identity, we must also be cognizant of the commemorative cultures and identities that came before, and which persist in present definitions and digitizations.⁴² The NLI “Signatories” collections for example, a prestige series in preparation from 2014, presents such a case: a commemorative digitization that re-traditionalizes history and re-legitimizes the narrative of seven men at the same time as the *process* of re-cataloguing and digitization, incidentally rather than by design, extensively revealed women’s records and stories in the archive - a detail lost in the official and aesthetic narrative of this digitization.⁴³ As Gabriele points out, the current “cultural desire to digitize” both favors certain structures of power and “is constituted itself by residual practices of preservation, access and valuation.”⁴⁴ She contends that “neither the concept of remediation nor that of surrogacy provides an adequate conceptual framework for thinking about the traces that remain of the power, ideologies, discourses and institutional policies that mark objects as having ‘intrinsic’ or ‘permanent’ value in the language of archives.”⁴⁵ How, in other words, the traces of the past come to be in our digital present is neither self-evident nor value-free.

At this point it seems pertinent to state that this article does not set out to denunciate digitization. Rather it is to draw attention to how remembrance culture influences digitization just as digitization has cultural implications.⁴⁶ Digital archives shape and are shaped by national commemorative agendas: they are not neutral gestures but deliberate cultural constructions. Just as Moravec warns of the beguiling power of abundance to obfuscate continued absence, we should not lose sight of the fact that archives in digital form may also perpetuate - albeit in new contexts - dominant narratives while eclipsing others, particularly where they are in the service of national identity projects founded in commemoration.⁴⁷ The ways in which digital cultural heritage is narrativized through official commemorations bodies like *Ireland 2016*, political speeches, and government publications play a part in establishing the lingua franca of national commemorations

³⁷ Paul Conway, “Digital Transformations and the Archival Nature of Surrogates,” *Archival Science* 15, no. 1 (2015): 57.

³⁸ Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory*, 3.

³⁹ Kate Eichhorn, “Beyond Digitisation: A Case Study of Three Contemporary Feminist Collections,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 3 (2014): 229.

⁴⁰ Sandra Gabriele, “Transfiguring the Newspaper: From Paper to Microfilm to Database,” *Amodern*, no. 2 (2013): 1, <http://amodern.net/article/transfiguring-the-newspaper/>.

⁴¹ Mak, “Archaeology of a Digitization,” 1517; Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory*, 4.

⁴² Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory*, 3.

⁴³ “1916 Digital Collections,” National Library of Ireland, accessed July 1, 2019, <http://www.nli.ie/1916/>.

⁴⁴ Gabriele, “Transfiguring the Newspaper,” 7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁶ Thylstrup, *The Politics of Mass Digitisation*, 19.

⁴⁷ Michelle Moravec, “Feminist Research Practices and Digital Archives,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, no. 91–92 (2017): 194.

and cannot be entirely dismissed as vacuous policy statements. Language, as Smith posits, is central to the heritage *process* as it pertains to communal practices of remembrance: “the discourse we use to understand them and give them meaning - also shape and form our memories and frame the process of remembering and forgetting.”⁴⁸ Our perceptions of the past have material consequences for the ways in which we individually and collectively understand and navigate the present. Digital archives are therefore as much a threshold for critically interrogating the present as they are the past. They are sites of meaning making, yet in a sense not limited to questions of memory and history; they are entanglements of past and present, culture and politics, heritage and identity, but also of technological, financial, legal, and material realities.⁴⁹ Digital collections are, after all, also part of a “cyberinfrastructure” and systems of “production and distribution.”⁵⁰ We should therefore address digital (commemorative) archives as such and a defining statement is provided by Mak: “digitisations may be recognized as vibrant and historically situated sources in their own right that offer alternative points of entry into enduring debates about the production and transmission of knowledge.”⁵¹

One such digitization has emerged as a tour de force in historicizing the revolution and problematizing gendered historical roles and identities. This article now turns to this archetype of the digital commemorative archive, the *Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection* (MSPC).

The MSPC

The Military Service Pensions Archive project is a cornerstone project of the Government’s Decade of Centenaries 2012-2022 Commemorative programme. This project will serve as a permanent reminder of this commemorative period and will be a resource for future generations.⁵²

All (digital) collections have a history and there is a wealth of detail about the constitution of the MSPC that is unparalleled in other commemorative digitizations of the period. Such is the nature of these records and accompanying administrative documents, but also the significant work of distilling this information for wider use. Navigating the collection online is strongly based on the extensive *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection*, published in 2012, that covers the “origins, scope and content of the records, the legislative framework within which they were created, the processes which led to grant or refusal of pensions, and the methodology underpinning their archival management.”⁵³ That gender politics were also constitutive of these records from the outset of the pensions scheme has also been extensively articulated in the work of Marie Coleman.⁵⁴ Rather than repeat this well-documented tale of the pensions scheme I will draw attention to its recent history as a digitization and its link to the centenary project. Those working on the collection have made clear the logic of this particular digitization project as a commemorative archive: “we want people to judge it as an exercise of national identification and in itself as an act of commemoration as well.”⁵⁵ Gordon has further emphasized the link between these records, identity, and meaning-making processes, and the ways in which they are

⁴⁸ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 58-59.

⁴⁹ Mak, “Archaeology of a Digitization.,” 1522.

⁵⁰ Helle Strandgaard Jensen, “Digital Archival Literacy for (All) Historians,” *Media History*, 2020, 3.

⁵¹ Mak, “Archaeology of a Digitization.,” 1516.

⁵² Paul Kehoe, “Forward”, in Cécile Gordon et al., *The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection: The Brigade Activity Reports* (Department of Defence, Ireland, 2018), 6.

⁵³ Alan Shatter, “Foreword,” in *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection*, ed. Catriona Crowe (Óglaigh na hÉireann, 2012), 9.

⁵⁴ See: Marie Coleman, “Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916–1923,” *Women’s History Review* 27, no. 3 (2016): 1–20.

⁵⁵ Cécile Gordon, Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Project, “Discussion Panel QA,” Soundcloud, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://soundcloud.com/user-468339899-144564352/discussion-panel-qa>.

circumscribed by this period of national remembrance: “The records anchor the living to their origins through the representation of their relative’s role during a momentous period in Irish history and this can be deeply linked to their own sense of identity. The current context of the commemorations exacerbates this link...”⁵⁶

The 2006 release of the MSP files occurred in the year of the ninetieth anniversary of the Rising, the first anniversary since 1971 when a state military commemoration was reinstated in the Republic. Already at this time, plans to make these documents digitally available “in good time for the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising in 2016” were emerging. In April that year it was announced by then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern that a steering group was to oversee the arrangement, cataloguing, and digitization of the collection as well as an academic advisory board, one that until recently did not include any women.⁵⁷ The MSPC has since been catalogued and released online in phases beginning in 2014, and more often aligned to moments of commemoration or historical significance. Since becoming public domain there has been a calculated ten-year lead-in to this digital archive specifically with the centenary commemorations in mind. Catriona Crowe confirmed this as a goal of the project to make the collection available to historians in time for new histories of the Rising and the revolutionary period to be written for the centenary, describing the MSPC rather deterministically as “the last big piece of the archival jigsaw concerning the decade of centenaries” and citing the BMH as the other major piece.⁵⁸ This series is commemorative in both the original award of service medals upon successive anniversaries of the rising and revolutionary period, and the circumstances of their contemporary release as a searchable database. The first release of files and the new holding website for the MSPC was launched in a state ceremonial at the General Post Office in Dublin by Taoiseach Enda Kenny and several senior cabinet Ministers in 2014. More recently, the Medal Series appeared upon the historical centenary of the Rising in April 2016.

An occasion that also marked the opening of the new Military Archives (MA) facility as *part of* the cultural and archival response to the centenary of 1916, the Medal files were launched in a state ceremonial by President Michael D. Higgins.⁵⁹ This refurbishment and expansion of the facility at Cathal Brugha Barracks was financed and delivered as one of the “seven flagship capital projects” or “Permanent Reminders” for the centenary of the Rising as set out in the “Historical Reflection” strand of the Ireland 2016 programme.⁶⁰ Completed at a cost of €5.4 million, this accounted for approximately 17% of the “capital” budget that covered these “permanent reminders” (€31 million), or 11% of the overall 2016 commemorations budget of €49 million.⁶¹ Thylstrup asks how digitization may change the ideological infrastructure of cultural heritage institutions.⁶² In the case of the MA, a long and very public digitization process has operated to turn the MA into a national cultural institution in a way that it was not previously, both in the cultural value it has been afforded and the investment in its physical infrastructure as a “permanent

⁵⁶ Cécile Gordon, “Archives and Public History,” *Studia Hibernica* 46, no. 1 (2020): 126.

⁵⁷ Willie O’Dea, “Dáil Éireann Debate - 24 Oct 2006. Departmental Files. Written Answer to Question No. 672,” accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2006-10-24/445/>; Catriona Crowe, “Introduction” in *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection*, 10–11.

⁵⁸ Catriona Crowe, “News From the Archives: Military Service Pensions Collection,” RTÉ The History Show, 19 November, 2017.

⁵⁹ Government of Ireland, “Centenary Programme,” 22.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Marie Coleman, “‘There Are Thousands Who Will Claim to Have Been “out” during Easter Week.’: Recognising Military Service in the 1916 Easter Rising,” *Irish Studies Review* 26, no. 4 (2018): 489; Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Department of Arts, Culture, Heritage, Regional, “Briefing for Members of Public Accounts Committee 2016 Report Comptroller and Auditor General: Chapter 15 Solas - Galway Art House Cinema 2016 Appropriation Account Vote 33 The Department of Arts , Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs,” Houses of the Oireachtas, 5, accessed September 4, 2020,

https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/committee_of_public_accounts/submissions/2018/2018-03-29_briefing-note-the-department-of-arts-heritage-regional-rural-and-gaeltacht-affairs_en.pdf.

⁶² Thylstrup, *The Politics of Mass Digitisation*, 19.

reminder.”⁶³ Commandant Ayiotis, the serving Defence Forces officer in charge of the repository, indeed went so far as to claim that the aforementioned refurbishment and expansion “has elevated the Military Archives to a new level alongside the national institutions of the State.”⁶⁴ At the opening event in April 2016, Minister for Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht Heather Humphries predicted that the new building would be “one of the most important cultural legacies of the Ireland 2016 Centenary programme.”⁶⁵

A boon for historians of the period, both the BMH and MSP collections have become historical forces in and of themselves, garnering attention for their coming into being as much as for their contents. The ease with which academic literature on these collections could be found, and in relatively ample supply, attests to this intense research gaze. The opening of the MSPC and its digitization have been, for the most part, one in the same meaning that its wide use has been primarily tied to digital access. Digital interfaces also mediate our interactions with all such records, another interpretive frame and “logic” that differs significantly from analogue collections.⁶⁶ Described as “an archival and preservation project, but it is also a project about access and it is a very significant identification work,” by design the priority is to reconstruct the identity of the applicants from the perspective of the user, facilitating genealogical work, and this is reflected in the interface affordances of the collection.⁶⁷

The pervasive use of these records is testament to their free and digital availability, investment in usability, and ultimately their relationship to a period in Irish history that continues unabated to dominate the national imaginary. It is also a testament to the value placed upon them by the State and researchers alike, with great monetary and academic investment in their preparation, digitization, and wide promotion as a “high value” resource.⁶⁸ Book chapters have been dedicated to the opening of witness accounts and the ongoing MSPC project, forewords to new editions and new publications have made reference to the change that these digitizations have wrought and in particular upon the study of women and “democratizing historical research.”⁶⁹ Since the first release, it has become something of a keystone to the revolution and its afterlife, and emblematic of the digitality of the commemorations. Overtaking, but indissociable from, the BMH, the MSPC was proclaimed in 2012 by then Minister for Defence Alan Shatter as the “single most important archival collection relating to Ireland’s revolutionary period” and further characterized by Ayiotis as “the jewel in the crown of the military archives.”⁷⁰ The sentiment has been echoed by historians, declaring the project “groundbreaking,” “monumental,”

⁶³ Government of Ireland, “Centenary Programme,” 23.

⁶⁴ Commandant Padraic Kennedy, in Ronan McGreevy, ed., *Centenary: Ireland Remembers 1916 / Comóradh Céad Bliain: Tugann Éire 1916* (Dublin: Government Publications/Royal Irish Academy, 2016), 277.

⁶⁵ “Press Release April 26, 2016: Opening of the New Military Archives Building by President Michael D. Higgins and Launch of the Medals Database,” MerrionStreet.ie, accessed March 18, 2019, https://merrionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/Releases/Opening_of_the_new_Military_Archives_Building_by_President_Michael_D_Higgins_and_launch_of_the_Medals_Database.html.

⁶⁶ Jensen, “Digital Archival Literacy for (All) Historians,” 2–6.

⁶⁷ Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection Blog, “The Collection,” accessed June 6, 2018, <https://militarypensions.wordpress.com/the-collection-2/>; Tessa Hauswedell et al., “Of Global Reach yet of Situated Contexts: An Examination of the Implicit and Explicit Selection Criteria That Shape Digital Archives of Historical Newspapers,” *Archival Science* 20 (2020): 153.

⁶⁸ Decade of Centenaries, “Fifth Release from Military Service (1916-23) Pensions Collection Now Available, May 2018,” accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/launch-of-latest-release-from-military-service-1916-23-pensions-collection-may-2018/>.

⁶⁹ Eve Morrison, “The Bureau of Military History,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, ed. John Crowley et al. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2017), 876–80; Marie Coleman, “The Military Service Pensions Collection,” in *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*, ed. John Crowley et al. (Cork: Cork University Press, 2017), 881–85; Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble* (London: Profile Books, 2015), 17–23; Marie Coleman, “Foreword to the New Edition,” in *Irish Women & Nationalism: Soldiers, New Women and Wicked Hags*, ed. Louise Ryan and Margaret Ward (Irish Academic Press, 2019), ix–xx; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising in Ireland: Easter 1916*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xiv.

⁷⁰ Shatter, “Foreword,” 9.

“transformative” and “the most important” of the archival collections being digitized during this DoC.⁷¹ The MSPC Blog again describes the collection as one that “occupies a crucial and unique place in the Irish archival landscape.”⁷²

Immense cultural weight has thus been ascribed to this collection making it, quite aside from the details of its contents, inextricable from a politics of national remembrance and identity, and warranting the presence of high political office on multiple occasions since its inception. If “events are encoded with meaning as they actually occur” and the “archivization produces as much as it records the event,” the interplay then between the very public digitization of these archives, the commemorations to which they attend, and their academically and politically reinforced status, may operate to encode the one and the other in mnemonic symbiosis.⁷³ Digitized in the commemorative spotlight it has become a heritage collection at the vanguard of the centenaries and of feminist historical scholarship. In the Government’s 2021 centenary programme, recently published, McCoolle again drew attention to the link between the military collections, digitization, and a how “change is happening to the historic canon.”⁷⁴ A section on the continuing work of the MA states that there will be “a particular focus on the role and experiences of women who were active during the period and on their later lives” an emphasis that departs significantly from previous interpretation and takes an explicitly feminist standpoint, commensurate with the Mná100 resource in development for the final phase of the centenaries.⁷⁵ As McCoolle reflects in this announcement, the transformation in historical consciousness of how women shaped Irish history will be a significant legacy of the DoC.⁷⁶ The military collections in particular have also been framed as digital monuments to the commemorative decade and they continue to be referenced in ongoing phases of the DoC that seek to expand on this digital archival assemblage established in the first phase of centenaries.⁷⁷

Archiving Feminism

This archival turn in contemporary Irish feminism speaks to Hall’s meditation on the moment of the archive: “The most important things an archive can do is to ask or allow us to interrogate those moments of transition, because they are often also the moments of high creativity.”⁷⁸ For example, McAuliffe and Gillis’ community research project on the seventy-seven women detained at Richmond Barracks after the Rising made clear the links being made by Irish women between commemoration, feminist heritage, and citizenship today, and the ways in which this was sparked and supported by archives.⁷⁹ Another powerful example of these archival resonances is the way in which abortion rights activists mobilized the heritage of 1916 in their 2016 ‘March for Choice,’ demanding a repeal of the eighth amendment that effectively banned abortion in most cases.

⁷¹ Eunan O’Halpin, “The Military Service Pensions Project and Irish History: A Personal Perspective,” in *Guide to the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection*, ed. Catriona Crowe, 2012, 144; Ayiotis, “About the Military Archives”; Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble* (London: Profile Books, 2015), 21; Ferriter, “1916 in 2016: Personal Reflections of an Irish Historian”; Mike Cronin, “Irish History Online and in Real Time: Century Ireland and the Decade of Centenaries Mike Cronin,” *Éire-Ireland* 52 (2018): 274; Marie Coleman, “Compensating Irish Female Revolutionaries, 1916-1923,” *Women’s History Review* 27, no. 3 (2016): 1.

⁷² Military Archives, “The Collection,” Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC) Blog, accessed March 18, 2019, <https://militarypensions.wordpress.com/the-collection-2/>.

⁷³ Ian McBride, “Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland,” in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 8; Jaques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 17.

⁷⁴ Government of Ireland, “Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023: 2021 Programme,” 12.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 23, 11–12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁷ Government of Ireland, “Project Ireland 2040: Investing in Our Culture, Language & Heritage 2018-2017” (Dublin, 2018), 36.

⁷⁸ Stuart Hall, “Constituting an Archive,” *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (2001): 92

⁷⁹ Mary McAuliffe et al., “Forgetting and Remembering - Uncovering Women’s Histories at Richmond Barracks: A Public History Project,” *Studies in Arts and Humanities* 02, no. 01 (2016): 17–32.

Women revolutionaries were mobilized in the campaign, traversing temporalities of feminism. A graphic remix of the headline image of *Bean na h'Éireann*, the “radical republican-feminist” journal produced by Inghinidhe na h'Éireann, was used by the Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC) to frame the theme of the march – “Rise and Repeal” – in September 2016.⁸⁰ Capitalising on the commemoration of the Rising the previous March and official recognition of women’s historical agency, ARC volunteers replaced the title “Bean na h'Éireann” (Woman of Ireland) with “Rise and Repeal” emblazoning the banner at the vanguard of the protest and used in online media and campaign ephemera. According to ARC volunteers, the cutting was sourced from an article about revolutionary women published on *Century Ireland* – a flagship digital history project of the DoC – by historian Sinéad McCool whose work has drawn extensively on the military records. The image originates from the BMH contemporary document series, reproduced online by the South County Dublin Library.⁸¹ Attendees of the protest referenced the efforts to fairly represent women in the centenary celebrations, linking this with their struggle: “One hundred years on, we endeavour to recognise and honour the valiant Irish women of our past. But what about Irish women now?”⁸² In the run up to the Rising centenary, the ARC had also drawn on historical imagery of Cumann na mBan members in their #AnAppropriateWoman campaign responding to comments by the Taoiseach about a proposed constitutional convention to deal with the abortion issue.⁸³ Amplified by the commemorative impulse, these “feminist assemblages” were facilitated by digitality where activist volunteers could research and, as Chidgey has observed of suffragism in the British context, “re-assemble materials gathered from personal artefacts, popular culture, mass media and digitized archive collections.”⁸⁴

(Digital) archives are shapers of culture in diffuse ways and evidently more resonant when they are part of the commemorative assemblage that mediates memory and identity in Irish remembrance culture. Just as growing public awareness of archival heritage was noted by historians in the afterglow of 2016, a concomitant awareness of past failures to value women’s activism as worthy of remembering and recording has undoubtedly informed efforts to document this ‘Repeal’ movement.⁸⁵ In the aftermath of the successful 2018 referendum, there was a flurry of rapid-response collecting to preserve the physical protest ephemera from both sides of the campaign, notably by the National Museum of Ireland, as well as born-digital records;⁸⁶ the NLI archived a collection of websites and social media pages from the campaign, as did the British Library in its “Bodily Autonomy” collection;⁸⁷ the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) has undertaken to

⁸⁰ See: “Press Release 20 September 2016,” Abortion Rights Campaign, accessed March 7 2020, <https://www.abortionrightscampaign.ie/2016/09/20/press-release-from-abortion-rights-campaign-huge-cross-party-show-of-support-for-repeal-of-8th-amendment-as-politicians-pledge-to-secure-abortion-rights-in-ireland/>

⁸¹ Information on the production of this graphic was provided by Caoimhe Doyle of the Abortion Rights Campaign; Sinéad McCool “Women of the Rising: Activists, fighters & widows,” *Century Ireland*, Accessed 1 March 2016, <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/women-of-the-rising>.

⁸² Aoife Riach Kelly in “Rise and Repeal,” ed. Éilís Murphy (2016), *National Irish Visual Arts Library*, IE/NIVAL AB/ZC/175.

⁸³ @freesafelegal, *Twitter*, 21 March 2016, accessed 20 April 2021, <https://twitter.com/freesafelegal/status/711987461803540481>; @freesafelegal, *Twitter*, 28 March 2016, accessed 20 April 2021 <https://twitter.com/freesafelegal/status/714413763697446914>.

⁸⁴ Red Chidgey, *Feminist Afterlives: Assemblage Memory in Activist Times*, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 6.

⁸⁵ Diarmaid Ferriter, “How the Sources Came Alive,” in *Reflecting on a Decade of War and Revolution in Ireland 1912-1923: Historians on 1916* (Mansion House, Dublin: Universities Ireland, 2016); Horne, “The Larger Canvas”; Brenda Malone, “Recording Change: A Case Study of Collecting the Irish Abortion Rights Referendum, 2018,” in *Museums, Sexuality, and Gender Activism*, ed. Joshua Adair and Amy Levin (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2020), 208.

⁸⁶ “Posters, Banners, Boarding Passes: Museums Try to Get a Head Start on History,” *New York Times*, 8 June 2018.

⁸⁷ National Library of Ireland, “The Eighth Amendment Referendum 2018” (Dublin, 2018), accessed 3 March 2020, <http://www.nli.ie/getAttachment.aspx?Id=8fdaf4b2-9ca0-411a-85c8-0c7101a458d7>; ‘Bodily Autonomy,’ *British Library*, accessed 3 March 2020, <https://beta.webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/1944>.

preserve the *Together for Yes* collection;⁸⁸ and *Archiving the 8th* is creating a central resource for such activist archiving around the eighth amendment.⁸⁹ The *Artists for Repeal* group, who created textile protest banners inspired by the 1875 Daniel O’Connell centenary celebrations in Dublin, maintained an archive of letters and pamphlets and expressly intended that “they would be gathered in a national collection and nobody could say that we didn’t fight for our rights,” seeing archiving not as separate but “an integral part of their social movement activism.”⁹⁰ Though they cannot rectify past asymmetries in collecting records of women who inspired Repeal activists, the urgency of documenting these campaigns for the future, this archival turn in Irish feminism, is a tacit acknowledgement of prevailing silences in the historical record and the contingencies of collective remembrance.

Digital access is, for most, the path of least resistance, and what is freely available online will always be used more and by a wider range of people. Such access can promote greater interest in archival heritage but it can also narrow perceptions of archival availability. Upon the first launch of the MPSC online, O’Halpin anticipated the Medal Series to be the “only one missing piece in the state’s archival mosaic of the Irish revolution.”⁹¹ This kind of discourse, echoed by Crowe and underpinned by digitization, promotes a perception that the military collections, and particularly the MSPC, are somehow definitive of the revolution and of archival possibilities, a view that is certainly not shared by archivists working on this project nor those of us attune to the more capricious nature of finding women in the archives.

Conclusion

If “the use of records fundamentally changes them, becoming part of their provenance” then digitization for commemoration is also part of the narrative of these collections.⁹² Equally, feminism has been brought to bear upon the archives during this time, and is not simply a question of presence, absence, or digital availability. This work benefits from a relatively novel willingness to fully recognize women’s contributions in official commemoration, coming on the back of decades of research and grassroots activism, as well as the affective economy of a national period of commemoration. Such archival affordances may also carry greater weight because they are inscribed in normative historical narratives. In 2016, Pašeta frankly observed that in terms of Irish women in history, less than ten years ago we scarcely had names beyond Constance Markievicz and Maude Gonne, and that the witness statements had changed this. She recalled the prevailing attitude that there simply were no archives for writing women in history, going on to point out that “there was evidence out there before these [witness statements], people just had to start believing these women were worthy of study.”⁹³ McAuliffe, similarly, has since reflected on the fact that four decades of women’s history scholarship that preceded the apparent feminist turn in the 2016 centenary was still largely unknown or dismissed asking us to question “how what is commemorated is made visible - and by whom.”⁹⁴ Indeed, as the Maynooth conference indicated, the commemorative stimulus, though influential, has not altogether resulted in a paradigm shift

⁸⁸ ‘Together for Yes archive to be preserved in DRI’, Digital Repository of Ireland, accessed 28 February 2020, <https://dri.ie/together-yes-archive-be-preserved-dri>

⁸⁹ ‘About,’ *Archiving the 8th*, <https://archivingthe8th.wordpress.com/about/>, accessed 21 May 2019; ‘Announcing the ‘Digital Preservation of Reproductive Health Resources: Archiving the 8th’ project,’ Digital Repository of Ireland, accessed 9 March 2020, <https://www.dri.ie/announcing-archiving-8th-project>

⁹⁰ Emine Sanar, ‘The hateful Eighth: artists at the frontline of Ireland’s abortion rights battle’ *The Guardian*, 28 April 2018.

⁹¹ O’Halpin, ‘The Military Service Pensions Project and Irish History: A Personal Perspective,’ 144.

⁹² Caswell, “‘The Archive’ Is Not an Archives,” 12.

⁹³ Senia Pašeta, “Where Were the Women in 1916 and Where Are They Now?,” in *Reflecting on a Decade of War and Revolution in Ireland 1912-1923: Historians on 1916* (Mansion House, Dublin: Universities Ireland, 2016).

⁹⁴ Mary McAuliffe, “Remembered For Being Forgotten,” in *Women and the Decade of Commemorations*, ed. Oona Frawley (Indiana University Press, 2021), 36, 22.

and this established feminist scholarship still faces sidelining and tokenism.⁹⁵ These observations crystallize the ways in which historical narratives come to be written at all, are marginalized or become mainstream, contingent on the given social, cultural, and political context in which both historians and the public operate, as much as the availability of archives. They also speak directly to the power of digitization when circumscribed by authorized commemoration. Strongly linked as it is to access, civic participation, and governance, digitization is one of the ways in which authorized commemoration is simultaneously re-legitimized and challenged. Coded by the commemorative impulse, digitisations may come to represent more than the sum of their contents, together in this “archival jigsaw” and commemorative assemblage in which Irish identities are shaped, reshaped, and performed.

⁹⁵ Linda Connolly, “Introduction: Women in Ireland’s Revolution, 1917-1923: Marginal or Constitutive?,” in *Women and the Irish Revolution: Feminism, Violence, Nationalism*, ed. Linda Connolly (Irish Academic Press, 2020), 4–5; For further discussion of the long-standing resistance to meaningfully engaging feminist scholarship see: Linda Connolly, “The Limits of ‘Irish Studies’: Historicism, Culturalism, Paternalism,” *Irish Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (2004): 139–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0967088042000228914>.