KATHLEEN CLARKE: A LIFE PROCLAIMED

An Analysis of *Revolutionary woman* by Kathleen Clarke

A Thesis for the Degree of MLitt, Department of Modern History, Trinity College Dublin,

presented for 31 March 2023

By Helen Litton, M.A.

DECLARATION

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SUMMARY

This thesis sets out to analyse a memoir written by Kathleen Daly Clarke, published under the title *Revolutionary woman* in 1991.

Kathleen Clarke was married to Tom Clarke, first signatory of the Proclamation of 1916, and one of the leaders of the Easter Rising, 1916. Tom was executed on 3 May 1916, and Kathleen's only brother Edward, Commandant of the Four Courts garrison, was executed the following day.

Kathleen went on to become a strong public and political figure in early twentieth-century Ireland. She was an active member of the Sinn Féin executive, and later joined Éamon de Valera in the establishment of Fianna Fáil. Elected to Dublin City Council over several decades, she was elected first woman Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1939.

Her political life was almost an anomaly in Ireland during her active years, as women were more and more discouraged from leading public or political lives. Kathleen spent her last few years in England with her son Emmet and his family, and died there in September 1972. Her body was brought back to Ireland, and she was given a State Funeral.

She had begun to write her memoir during the 1940s, and originally hoped to publish it herself, but ultimately left it to be published after her death. She wrote it primarily to establish the primacy of her husband's name in historical accounts of the Rising, because she felt that his part was being overlooked in favour of more charismatic leaders such as Patrick Pearse and James Connolly. She also wrote to remember the part her own family, the Dalys of Limerick, had played in Ireland's fight for independence; her uncle, John Daly, spent twelve years in prison for Fenian activities.

I knew the memoir well, since I was responsible for having it published by O'Brien Press in 1991. I had worked freelance in publishing for many years, editing and indexing, and was able to present it in publishable condition. However, I always felt that there was more to be said. Kathleen had written this for publication, so there were probably aspects of her life that she did not reveal. I also wanted to find out what others thought of her, and how her career was viewed.

I am fortunate to have a family connection with Kathleen Clarke, as her sister Laura was my grandmother, my father's mother. I have therefore had access to family memories and family resources to add to my researches. I have also researched archives of people who would have known Kathleen, such as Éamon de Valera, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and those who worked with her in the Irish Volunteer Dependents Fund, Cumann na mBan, Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil. I have done a lot of

background reading, since I was not very familiar with the period following the Easter Rising. I had researched that already, as I wrote two volumes in the O'Brien Press series 'Sixteen Lives', about the men executed after the Rising, one on Edward Daly and one on Tom Clarke.

My analysis has not, in the end, led where I hoped. Her political career cannot be used as an example of women in Irish politics, because her career was *sui generis*. No-one mentored her, and no-one followed her; by the time she retired from politics, in 1942, even fewer women seemed to be politically involved than had been in the 1920s. However, I have found out a good deal more about her, and I hope my research might be a foundation for a future biography. Her life was important, among other things, for its fortitude, and her refusal to be pushed out of the picture when she had earned a right to be heard.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the Department of Modern History, Trinity College Dublin, for giving me the opportunity to do this MLitt. I am particularly grateful to Professor Anne Dolan, for her patience and consideration through this occasionally tortuous process. She was always a calm and encouraging presence.

I wish to thank Dr Mary McAuliffe and Dr Sinéad McCoole, who encouraged me on this path, and acted as my referees. Dr McAuliffe also assisted me with quotes from the Kathleen Lynn diaries. I enjoyed the company of the other History postgrads whenever we met, and I owe particular thanks to Maria Kane for the title, 'A Life Proclaimed'.

I am extremely grateful to my cousin, Ríonach de h-Óir, who gave me unfettered access to the archive of her grandfather, Éamon Dore. This has not yet been properly archived, but was very useful to me. All references in the footnotes to 'Dore Archive' refer to this private collection; there is another collection of Dore family papers in the Daly Collection, Glucksman Library, University of Limerick.

In terms of research institutions, I have to thank the Bureau of Military History; the City of London Metropolitan Archives; the Glucksman Library, University of Limerick; the National Archives of Ireland; the National Library of Ireland; Trinity College Dublin Archives; University College Dublin Archives. Their staffs were invariably welcoming and extremely helpful, even while coping with the long-running Covid restrictions.

Finally, thanks are due to all my friends and family for their patience and tolerance over the last two and a half years. I could not have completed it without the love and support of my children, Anthony and Eleanor, and above all my husband Frank, who was a tower of strength at all times.

Helen Litton, March 2023.

COVID STATEMENT

I registered with T.C.D. for this MLitt in October 2020, when it seemed that the Covid epidemic might be on the wane. However, this was not the case, and I had not got very far with my research before all libraries and archive institutions were forced to close. Even when they reopened, hours and staffing were more limited than before. I did my best to continue my research online, but in many cases this was not possible.

Fortunately, the university kindly granted me an extension of six months on my registration, for which I am very grateful. My date for completion became 31 March 2023, rather than 30 September 2022.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.M.H.	Bureau of Military History
D.E.	Dáil Éireann
F.F.	Fianna Fáil
I.N.A.&V.D.F	Irish National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund
I.R.P.D.F	Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents' Fund
I.W.W.U.	Irish Women Workers' Union
M.S.P.	Military Service Pensions
N.A.I.	National Archives of Ireland
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
S.F.	Sinn Féin
T.C.D.	Trinity College Dublin
U.C.D.	University College Dublin
U.C.D.A.	University College Dublin Archives
U.L.	University of Limerick
W.S.	Witness Statement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION i
SUMMARY iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v
COVID STATEMENT vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS xi
ABSTRACT xv
INTRODUCTION 1
Who was Kathleen Clarke? 3
The publication of Revolutionary woman 4
Publication 5
Media reviews 7
Historians' reviews 10
Kathleen's choice of material 14
CHAPTER 1 17
A REVOLUTIONARY UPBRINGING 17
CHAPTER 2 29
POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE, 1916-1926 29
Cumann na mBan 30
The I.N.A.&.VD.F. 33
Collins as Secretary 39
Sinn Féin 41
Clarke in Holloway 45
Treaty talks 51
Treaty debates 54
Civil War 58
CHAPTER 3 65
POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE, 1926-1942 65

Fianna Fáil 65
Clarke's income 69
Clarke in Fianna Fáil, 1927-1932 70
Clarke as Senator, 1928-1936 71
Clarke and Fianna Fáil in government, 1932-1942 80
Clarke and the Constitution, 1937 82
Lord Mayor of Dublin, 1939-1941 85
Life after Fianna Fáil 94
CHAPTER 4 99
THE CHALLENGES OF MEMORY 99
Bureau of Military History 100
Witness statements 101
Pension applications 103
Remembrances 104
The 'golden generation' 106
Revolutionary woman as a study in memoir 107
Clarke's reasons for writing 109
Anger and isolation 110
Recollection and reality 112
Clarke and Collins 114
Clarke and MacDiarmada 115
Clarke and MacNeill 116
Clarke's political controversies 117
Tom Clarke in the G.P.O. 119
Connolly 'Kidnap' 120
Commemorations of the Easter Rising 122
CHAPTER 5 125
PERSON AND PERSONALITY 125
Clarke's health 125
Clarke and her children 129
Clarke's personality 132

Friends and relations 138
Personality assessment 140
CONCLUSIONS 143
APPENDIX 145
EPILOGUE 149
BIBLIOGRAPHY 151

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the memoir *Revolutionary woman*, written during the 1940s by Kathleen Daly Clarke, and published in 1991.

Kathleen married the Fenian activist Tom Clarke in 1901 in New York. They returned to Ireland in 1907, and Tom became a leader in the movement which led to the Easter Rising, 1916.

After his execution Kathleen, a widow with three sons, joined Sinn Féin, and was later a founder member of Fianna Fáil. She served as a TD, a Senator and a Dublin city councillor over several decades, and in 1939 was elected the first woman Lord Mayor of Dublin.

I hope my exploration of the memoir will shed more light on her career, extraordinary for a woman in early twentieth-century Ireland.

Helen Litton

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the career of Kathleen Clarke through the lens of her memoir, *Revolutionary woman: Kathleen Clarke 1878-1972*, published, through my agency, in 1991. I always knew that, despite the length and detail of the memoir, there was more to be learned about what was, in the Ireland of the first half of the twentieth century, an astonishing career for a woman. Widow of the Easter Rising leader Tom Clarke, she became in turn a TD, a Senator, and first woman Lord Mayor of Dublin – a position which at that time was the highest-paid office in the state.

In recent years, particularly during the Decade of Centenaries, there has been an explosion of interest in the history of women during this period, and a plethora of new biographies. It has puzzled me for some time that no-one has written a biography of Kathleen Clarke, when many far less prominent women have been granted that recognition. She has perhaps stood in her own light; *Revolutionary woman* is an excellent memoir, and it must seem that there could be little to add to it. Yet no memoir designed for publication can be fully objective, and this one was definitely designed for publication.

Spurred on by an apparent neglect of a woman whose life should have been hugely influential, this thesis is an analysis of aspects of the memoir. It is not a full biography, tracking down every date and address and hospital stay. It is my hope that one day someone else will write a full-scale, critical biography of Kathleen Clarke, whose life certainly deserves deeper exploration.

I have devoted Chapter 1 to her family background, because it is very important in the development of the life she subsequently lived. Her uncle John Daly looms large in this chapter, but it was unavoidable – he was extremely influential in the family, during and after his long imprisonment, and became quite dominant in the household when he returned to it. Clarke does not refer to him much in the memoir, and references to him in her letters to Tom can be quite critical of him, but there is no doubt that he loomed large in her early youth. And of course there is the fact that without their shared imprisonment, she would never have met Tom.

I have given two chapters to the details of her political career, chiefly because she does not give much information on this herself. In a later edition of the memoir I added an epilogue with quotes from her contributions in Seanad Éireann during the 1930s, feeling that this period could do with some embellishment. Hers was a long political career, between 1916 and 1942 – one which few men could emulate, let alone women. Chapter Two deals with her political life from the Easter Rising to her involvement in Sinn Féin. Chapter Three covers her political evolution from the move away from Sinn Féin, and her struggles within Fianna Fáil. I also deal with some of her work as a local politician. The extent of her political career, its length and breadth, is one of the key characteristics that distinguish her from many of her female contemporaries of the revolutionary period. For that alone, her political career merits more extensive consideration.

Chapter Four considers the challenges of memory. I discuss how people who have lived through traumatic events remember them, referring to the witness statements and pension applications held by the Bureau of Military History, particularly those in which Clarke is mentioned. I write about Clarke's memories, and how she used them to engage in controversy with those who dared to contradict her view of Tom's leading role in the Rising. I have consulted a number of archives belonging to Clarke's contemporaries, many of whom engaged in constant revisiting of the past. I had hoped to find more references to Clarke in these archives, but in fact her name rarely arises, except in relation to controversy. She gradually lost touch with many people, and she seems to have alienated even close friends over the years. I discuss briefly how women write memoir, as opposed to men.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I explore Clarke's personality, as seen through her relationships with her family and her children, and her constant struggles with poor health. Her innate independence and ruthlessness are illustrated. There is a coda concerning Tom Clarke himself, whom I found I was reappraising at the end of my work.

I am delighted to have engaged in this research, and I hope to demonstrate the range of her activities, and the extent to which she had to face down disdain, discouragement and belittlement at almost every turn. She was no saint, stepping on many toes through her career, noted for her sharp tongue, and a particular thorn in the side of political parties which expected their representatives to toe the line. Her memoir is a *tour de force* of recollection of revolutionary Ireland, rare in being written by a woman of the time, and continues up to 1942, when she retired.

Here you have a woman who mattered, who counted, who ended up as the highest paid official in the state. She was consistently placed in charge of large sums of money, from Clan na Gael, the Irish National Aid & Volunteer Dependents Fund (I.N.A.&V.D.F). and the White Cross to the financial committees of both Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil; money is where the power lies. None of that was just because she was the wife of Tom Clarke; she earned her positions through hard work and commitment. Yet she has never made the mark in public (or indeed historical) consciousness of, say, Maud Gonne or Countess Markievicz. Indeed, many men of less accomplishment or achievement are remembered in our history books and given the accolade of biographies. What has happened here? Is it because she never carried a gun? Because she does not fit into easy categories such as trade unionist or suffragist or feminist? Is she still mostly seen as Mrs Tom Clarke, noted only for having been a wife and then a widow? What more is necessary for her to be remembered?

Who was Kathleen Clarke?

Kathleen Clarke was born into the strongly nationalist Daly family of Limerick. Her father Edward and his brother John both took part in the Fenian rebellion of 1867, and her earliest political activity was helping to post appeals for the Amnesty Association, to get her uncle John out of prison in Britain. When John was released, he invited his ex-prison comrade Tom Clarke to visit him in Limerick and there Tom met John’s niece Kathleen Daly. Kathleen was twenty and Tom was forty; despite the age difference, they fell in love and were married in New York in 1901. A formidable combination, both were devoted to the cause of Ireland's independence.

Returning to Dublin in 1908, they ran two tobacconist shops and reared three sons, until Tom's plans for the Easter Rising came to fruition and ended in his execution. Kathleen, rather than retiring from the fray, threw herself vigorously into political life, fighting to keep their dream alive. Active in Sinn Féin, and a founder member of Fianna Fáil, she served as a TD and as a Senator, and was the first woman Lord Mayor of Dublin from 1939 to 1941. Retiring from politics, she remained active on numerous boards and committees until she moved in 1969 to live with her youngest son, Dr Emmet Clarke, in Liverpool, where she died in 1972, aged ninety-four. Her body was brought back to Dublin for a State funeral, pausing outside the G.P.O. on the way to Deansgrange Cemetery.

What is notable about her political career is that she achieved one at all. It is clear from studying twentieth-century Irish history that women, no matter how active and influential they had been during the revolutionary period, were gradually marginalised in the public life of the Irish Free State. Some of this had to do with the bitterness that survived after the Treaty debates and the Civil War, when the anti-Treaty women TDs were accused of being hysterical diehards and warmongers.

But there was also a pervasive and subliminal message that women had no place in politics, an almost fascist leaning towards '*kinder, küche, kirche*' which finally reached apotheosis in de Valera's Constitution of 1937. It is indeed extraordinary that the 'woman clauses' have not been thrown out long ago. Even Markievicz, the highest-profile woman of the period, was sidelined. In the First Dáil, she had to fight hard to be made Minister for Labour, a position she had surely earned. Kathleen Clarke bucked the trend; she fought off prejudice and ostracism to maintain her position in the Oireachtas, and in Dublin City Council, where she topped the poll several times.

The edition of *Revolutionary woman* I have used for the purposes of this research is the paperback edition published in 2008, which is still in print. All page numbers cited are taken from that edition, now entitled *Kathleen Clarke: Revolutionary woman*.

The publication of Revolutionary woman

Revolutionary woman seems to have been completed during the 1940s, after Kathleen's retirement from politics, but then vanished from view. When I chanced to meet my cousin, her son Emmet, in 1990 I asked him about it, because it had been rumoured in the family for years. He assured me that it did exist, but that Kathleen had decided it should not be published until after her death. The memoir had sat in a drawer in his house since 1972; a busy N.H.S. psychiatrist, he had had no time to do anything with it, nor any contact with the publishing world. I had worked freelance in publishing for years, mainly as an indexer and editor, and offered to prepare it for publication. I was pleased to get a chance to read it, and he was pleased at the prospect of its publication, so it worked out well for both of us.

I recognised immediately that it was eminently publishable. I had expected that it would deal with interesting historical material, but it might have been poorly written, or disorganised, or repetitive, and need a lot of editing. But Kathleen was a clear and straightforward writer,

wasting no words on waffle. The writing of such a work is a herculean task even for experienced writers, but she would have left school at about fourteen, and does not seem to have written anything else of a formal kind. She may not have been a reader, as far as one can tell, but her surviving letters to Tom and other family members are lively and informative. The Dalys were a reading family, familiar for example with the works of Dickens, and perhaps stories were read aloud to the children when she was young. She certainly listened to the Irish stories and legends relayed to the children by their aunt Lollie, which she later credited with her introduction to revolution.

It is not known when Clarke began to write the memoir, but it was probably in the later 1930s. In a letter to Devoy, in 1923, she writes, 'I have not yet set about those memoirs...I find it hard to get the time, but I mean to do it, though I have so little experience I fear I shall make a hash of it'.[1] In a letter to the Bureau of Military History (B.M.H.) in 1947 she says, 'I have already written most of it [my memoir] and intend to publish it some day'.[2] That would have only been a short memoir, and probably more about her husband than anything else. She certainly began writing in order to resuscitate the reputation of Tom Clarke in her mind, but after his death, about half-way through, it becomes much more personal. She did not in fact have much to do with the planning of the Easter Rising, but was certainly responsible for doling out the funds sent over from New York by Clan na Gael. She comes more and more into focus in the subsequent decades, instituting the I.N.A.&V.D.F., active in Sinn Féin and in Cumann na dTeachtaire, a founder member of Fianna Fáil, a trenchant opponent of the Treaty and a pioneering woman Lord Mayor. She also wished to memorialise her brother Ned Daly, Commandant of the Four Courts garrison, but she does not give much more space to her family, apart from recounting the various raids they were subject to between 1916 and 1922. She was not too interested in her own personal life, and chose to end the memoir at the point where her public life also seemed to end, although it was not quite her last taste of politics.

Publication

I retyped the memoir onto a floppy disk and brought it to O'Brien Press, for whom I had often worked. The late Michael O'Brien immediately contracted to publish it. Emmet kept the

1 N.L.I., Devoy papers, MS 18,001/12/8, 12 June 1923.
2 B.M.H., S 144, 4 June 1947.

copyright to the book, which presumably has descended to his surviving son, Thomas, but he very generously insisted that any royalties would go to me. In terms of editing, I had only to even up the length of some chapters, and remove some repetition unavoidable in a book worked on over several years (probably between 1939 and 1945). I footnoted references which would need explanation for a modern reader; many once-famous people pass out of historical memory quite quickly. I added footnotes about the Daly and Clarke families, as Clarke herself provided very little detail about them.

Emmet maintained Kathleen's personal archive, which contained all the letters sent between Tom and Kathleen whenever they were separated. (In those days you expected a reply by the following morning's post, and complained if it did not arrive.) He helpfully typed out many of these for me, so I was able to add illustrative quotes. They wrote very personal letters, with lively details of their lives. In fact, it is occasionally embarrassing to read what was meant only for a lover's eyes, but Kathleen could have destroyed these if she had wished, and chose not to.The book finishes quite abruptly, with her retirement from politics, so I added an epilogue with an outline of her subsequent life and career. I liaised with O'Brien Press on the choice of illustrations, and the design of the cover.

Revolutionary woman was published on Tuesday 2 April 1991, costing £16.95, and launched at the Irish Labour History Society Museum in Beggar's Bush, along with *Markievicz, The rebel countess* by Mary Moriarty and Catherine Sweeney. The book launches were part of an official opening of an exhibition of watercolour paintings by Constance Markievicz, presented by the National Gallery of Ireland, and 'Mná na hÉireann: The Women of 1916', an exhibition presented by the National Library of Ireland. Speakers included Bertie Ahern, Minister for Labour, Robert Ballagh and me. Emmet Clarke, who had flown over from Liverpool for the occasion, also spoke.

The audience was enthusiastic, and many copies of *Revolutionary woman* were sold that night, some people buying several at a time. Emmet was kept busy signing copies, including one for Ahern. The next day Bernie English singled out Emmet's speech for notice. [3] Emmet, then aged eighty-one, had naturally been imbued with the most hardline republican sentiments from birth, and his speech harked back to an older version of Irish history, citing pitch-

3 Bernie English, ‘Dublin Street Name ”Disgrace”, *Irish Press*, 3 April 1991, p. 3.

capping and evictions. He called vigorously for the renaming of Irish city streets for those who had given up their lives for Irish freedom, erasing the names of English military and nobility. Although he did not make it explicit, there was then no notable street or building named for Tom Clarke, apart from one of the Ballymun tower blocks (since demolished), and Dundalk railway station.[4] Emmet spoke about his mother, and of his memories of 1916, when he was six years old. Kathleen had been entrusted with the plans of the IRB and had had to memorise them, since keeping written notes was too dangerous. 'Had the Rising gone on longer she would have been in charge of a field hospital, and the day after my father was executed she set up a pension fund for dependants. She was that sort of woman', he said.[5]

The following day Emmet was interviewed by Donncha Ó Dulaing for RTÉ Radio. This was a very touching interview, because Emmet was brought back to his childhood, and memories of his father, and his voice broke down in the middle. He told me later that he was very embarrassed by that, and felt he had made a fool of himself, but Kate Shanahan rightly described it as a highly emotional radio moment.[6]

I was intrigued to find correspondence between Emmet and Seán O'Mahony in which Emmet discusses the publication.[7] He thanks O'Mahony for arranging the Ó Dúlaing interview, but complains, 'I sounded very old and a little bit too emotional'. A later letter, on 2 May, comments on me 'pestering' him to give him the manuscript, but is generous about my contribution: 'Since Helen did all the work I thought she should have the profit.'

Media reviews

Revolutionary woman clearly broke new ground for the history of 1916, and for the history of

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4 Several railway stations had been renamed for the executed leaders in 1966, the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, and Dundalk was chosen for Tom as being nearest to Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, where he had grown up. On 4 May 2016, marking the centenary of Tom's execution, Dublin's East Link Bridge was officially renamed the Tom Clarke Bridge by President Michael D. Higgins. I chair a Tom Clarke Memorial Committee, and we hope to erect a plaque in Dublin city centre, possibly for both Tom and Kathleen Clarke.
5 Michael O'Toole, reporting on the event, was angered by Emmet's 'virulent diatribe against perfidious Albion, the like of which is rarely heard nowadays in this country', not least by Emmet's claim that there was no violence in Ireland until the British introduced it. O'Toole spoke to Emmet later, asking whether he had found prejudice against him in England, and Emmet replied that 'the average Englishman is a very ignorant person, [but] anyone who tried to take me on certainly got more than they bargained for' (Michael O'Toole, 'Another blast from the green past', *Evening Press*, 3 April 1991, p. 9).
6 Kate Shanahan, 'Rebel with a cause', *Irish Press*, 26 April 1991, p. 24.
7 N.L.I., Seán O'Mahony papers, 49, 041/7, 2 May 1991.

women in Ireland. All the reviews noted its clarity and straightforwardness, and it was chosen as Book of the Week by the Cork *Evening Echo*[8] and by a radio programme, 'Risin' Time'. The *Donegal Democrat* described the book as 'an authentic account of the turbulent times and the famous people who shaped the future of the country'.[9] Lucile Redmond described Kathleen as someone who 'refused to bend to the political expediencies of her young nation'.[10]

Mary Maher found it written 'in the direct style of a prosaic schoolgirl', but fascinating in its recording of the ordinary details of domestic life, as well as the more exciting political struggles. Ultimately, Maher felt that a country is better served by more commonplace and questioning mortals, who don't squander themselves in martyrdom: 'Unfortunately, there are still too many rare heroes speaking to private gods'.[11] In *Books Ireland* that September, Celia de Fréine called the book 'a beautifully produced volume', refreshing because, among other aspects, it was written by a woman. She notes that 'Unwilling to compromise...Kathleen became, very often, a lone voice crying in the wilderness'.[12] Lorna Siggins mentions that Kathleen, interviewed in 1971, revealed that two publishers had turned down her memoir, afraid of libel actions, but that she refused to alter anything. She obviously expected her book to cause much controversy, but that did not happen. By 1991 politics had moved on, and indeed almost everyone mentioned in the book had died. But, as Siggins says, 'scholars of that period must surely find much of value in [this] version...by one who would have been wife of the first President of a new republic if the rising had been successful', as Kathleen always insisted Tom would have been.[13]

The *Evening Herald* gave the book a two-page spread on 28 March, reprinting Kathleen's account of her last visit to Tom in his prison cell the night before his execution. Maurice Manning adds to it his opinion of the Easter Rising, objecting to 'the right of a small self-selected elite not just to interpret Irish history, but to impose its sense of destiny on the Irish people', but he praised the 'vivid memory of the nobility of character of the leaders, their purity of vision and an ideal of a free, open, honest Ireland'. The newspaper also canvassed the views of young people on 1916; the consensus was that it should be remembered, but

8 ‘A woman’s revolution’, (unsigned), *Evening Echo*, 27 April 1991, p. 11.
9 ‘A personal glimpse of 1916 and after’, (unsigned), *Donegal Democrat*, 12 April 1991, p. 15.
10 Lucile Redmond, ‘Fighting Irishwomen across the centuries’, *Sunday Press*, 5 May 1991, ‘Living’, p. 10.
11 Mary Maher, ‘Married to the revolution’, *Irish Times*, 20 April 1991, ‘Weekend’, p. 8.
12 Celia de Fréine, ‘Deadlier than the male’, *Books Ireland*, September 1991, No. 152, pp. 150–1.
13 Lorna Siggins, *Customs Journal*, 1991, pp. 29–33.

without triumphalism, and that while moving away from the use of violence, we should remember the ideals of the leaders.[14]

The book was reviewed by Pól Ó Muirí in *Andersonstown News,* noting that 'Clarke's memoirs do not do much for the reputation of de Valera or any of the other men within the republican movement'.[15] Libby Kinney of the *Belfast Telegraph* said the memoir 'cuts straight through sentimentality and nostalgia...It gives an interesting inside look at the development of self-government. Slowly all that Kathleen had fought for seems to be compromised or neglected, including the right of women to be involved in power'.[16] And in the *Limerick Leader* Patricia Feehily, a sceptic about the worth of the Easter Rising, nevertheless writes, 'I cannot but applaud the courage and fortitude of people like Kathleen Clarke who went, unswervingly, to the centre stage, knowing that "the odds were too great, and I knew that my happiness was at an end"'.[17]

Not all reviewers were impressed by the memoir. Chenevix Trench, in particular, was quite negative, describing Tom and Kathleen as sharing 'the most out-and-out, uncompromising, Brit-hating Republicanism', and stating, 'Even as Lord Mayor of Dublin she achieved little more than gestures of the purest Republicanism and Anglophobia'. This makes little allowance for the times in which she lived, and her family background.[18] A review in the *Longford News* describes her as 'reactionary and ambiguous'; however, he/she adds, 'the book is a good, racy read'.[19] Anne Haverty describes the book as 'weak on insight and detail', with a pervasive air of self-sanctimoniousness…'. But she was 'not a harridan, pure and simple'.[20]

The high degree of interest illustrated by the number of reviews was also reflected in the sales of the book. It was third in the 'hardback non-fiction' bestseller list published by the Irish Books Marketing Group on 9 April 1991, and fourth in the 'Irish published' list. It sold 860 copies between March and July, and 578 the following year. The paperback publication in 1993 boosted sales again. In 1998, after a lull, 878 copies were sold, 456 of those overseas. It

14 'Kathleen's Rising', (unsigned), *Evening Herald*, 28 March 1991, pp. 20–21.
15 Pól Ó Muirí, 'A woman of substance', *Andersonstown News,* 31 August 1991, p. 26.
16 Libby Kinney, 'A woman's love for her man and country', *Belfast Telegraph,* 6 July 1991, p. 12.
17 Patricia Feehily, 'Kathleen Clarke—a woman of dignity', *Limerick Leader,* 13 April 1991, p. 4.
18 Charles Chenevix Trench, 'Anticlimax after the revolution', *Irish Independent,* 1 June 1991, p.18.
19 Anonymous, 'Revolution Mama!', *Longford News*, 9 May 1991.
20 Anne Haverty, 'More than a harridan', *Sunday Independent*, 29 September 1991, p. 8L.

continued to sell between 100 and 200 copies most years, and in 2008 a revised fourth edition (in paperback only) sold 472 copies. For that edition I added a longer epilogue, giving more detail about her political career. The title was changed to *Kathleen Clarke, revolutionary woman* to aid computer searches, then developing, and also to help American sales, as the reference to Revolution was confusing in the U.S.A. The selection of photographs was also updated; I tried to deflect the publisher's push to include more photos of male figures than in the first edition, but Éamon de Valera got in despite me. As far as I know, *Revolutionary woman* has never gone out of print.

Historians' reviews

Did this autobiography change the public view of Tom and Kathleen Clarke, and their part in Irish history, as she intended it to do? She wanted to retrieve her husband's reputation and role from the oblivion into which she felt it had fallen, overshadowed by charismatic personalities such as Pearse or Connolly, but she also wanted to reclaim the major role played by her family, and her own ceaseless activity for the cause of freedom. During the War of Independence and the Civil War, she had been sidelined by the men in charge, although she had done more than enough to deserve being taken seriously when she offered advice. To what extent has the publication of the autobiography altered existing narratives?

Revolutionary woman is listed in most bibliographies of books on twentieth-century Irish history published since 1991. Historians such as Margaret Ward and Sinéad McCoole have expressed to me their view of its importance as a light shining on a neglected part of Irish history, that of women's role. It is arguable that a good deal of recent biographical work on female republican activists, many of them forgotten for years, was kickstarted by *Revolutionary woman.* Before the public availability of the Bureau of Military History witness statements, the memoir reminded historians that women were active in the revolution and beyond, but that this story was being lost as people died. Professor Lucy McDiarmid assures me that it started her on a whole new path of research, into how women write memoir. She signed a copy of her book on the role of women in 1916 'for Helen, without whose edition of KC's autobiography this book would not exist'.[21]

21 Lucy McDiarmid, *At home in the revolution, what women said and did in 1916* (Dublin, 2015).

It is possible, looking at histories of Irish nationalism published before 1991, to see to what extent Clarke, or indeed any activist woman, was mentioned. Even books that deal with the I.N.A.&V.D.F., in relation to Michael Collins, fail to mention her. She maintained a correspondence with John Devoy for many years, but none of it appears in the two volumes of *Devoy's post bag.*[22] The *Wolfe Tone Annual* produced a special edition on Easter 1916 in 1935, including articles on Cumann na mBan, but when it produced a similar edition in 1946, all references to women's role had disappeared. It also produced *A salute to the soldiers of 1916* in 1960, but the only reference in it to women's role is a poem by Brian na Banban, 'The Soldiers of Cumann na mBan'. A raft of books and articles for the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, in 1966, heralded a period of more intense research, but women still remained largely absent. A special edition of *Studies* has five articles, none by a woman,[23] and the T.C.D. Publishing Company produced a special commemorative pamphlet with nineteen pieces, two by women, Máire Comerford and Mary MacSwiney, and inevitably photographs of Markievicz and Gonne MacBride.[24]

Reading these older works was useful for me, because they can deal with episodes which Clarke does not mention, or provide a contrasting point of view. Although she is largely absent where you might expect to find her, such as in histories of Fianna Fáil, she is most commonly found in biographies of Gonne and Markievicz, with whom she shared months of imprisonment in Holloway Jail in 1918-19. She would not have appreciated some of the references therein, which lay stress on her poor health and her worries about her children. *Revolutionary woman* undoubtedly provides a different slant on her prison time, and on the relationships among the three women.

Her links with the labour movement are mentioned in William O'Brien's reminiscences; she sat on the Dublin Trades Council, and spoke vigorously in the Seanad on bills which seemed calculated to limit women's opportunities in the workplace.[25] Macardle's *The Irish republic* mentions her several times, referencing her 1918 imprisonment, her role in the Dáil courts, her anti-Treaty stance and her efforts towards reconciliation in the aftermath of the Dáil

22 William O'Brien & Desmond Ryan, *Devoy's post bag 1871–1928,* 2 vols (Dublin, 1948, 1953).
23 *Studies* Vol. LV, No. 217, (Spring 1966).
24 '1916-1966: What has happened?' T.C.D. Publishing Company (Dublin, 1966).
25 Willam O'Brien, *Forth the banners go* (Dublin, 1969).

vote.[26] She was a prominent contributor to MacLochlainn's *Last words*, answering his many queries in relation to Tom and to her brother Edward Daly.[27]

She does of course turn up in studies which concentrate on women, such as Luddy and Murphy's *Women surviving*[28] and she receives two mentions in MacCurtain and Ó Corráin's *Women in Irish society*, though as representing her husband in the Dáil and Seanad rather than as an independent actor.[29] This surprises me rather in relation to MacCurtain; I would have expected her to be more appreciative of Clarke's role in politics.

Once *Revolutionary woman* was published it began to appear in bibliographies, both in general histories and in those dealing with Irishwomen of the early twentieth century. Of course it is used in two biographies of Tom Clarke, as well as a biography of MacDiarmada, and Kenna's biography of O'Donovan Rossa. For the centenary of the Easter Rising, O'Brien Press published a series called 'Sixteen Lives', consisting of biographies of the executed leaders and men, and *Revolutionary woman* appears in eight of the sixteen bibliographies. Kenneally and McDiarmid's *The vibrant house* features the Fairview house where the Clarkes were living in 1916. The massive Cork University Press production, *Atlas of the Irish revolution*, has three references to *Revolutionary woman*, though since Clarke is described as John Daly's daughter rather than his niece, some research seems to have been superficial.[30]

In terms of women's history, Clarke's memoir was used by Connolly, Gillis, McCarthy, Taillon and Knirck.[31] McCoole features Clarke heavily in two of her books,[32] and Matthews deals with her roles in the volunteer fund, Sinn Féin and the White Cross, as well as her 1918

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26 Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (Dublin, 1951).
27 Piaras F. MacLochlainn, *Last words: Letters & statements of the leaders executed after the Rising at Easter 1916* (Dublin, 1971).
28 M. Luddy & C. Murphy (eds.), *Women surviving, studies in Irish women's history in the 19th & 20th centuries* (Dublin, 1989).
29 M. MacCurtain & D. Ó Corráin, *Women in Irish society: The historical dimension* (Dublin, 1978).
30 M.T. Foy, *Tom Clarke, the true leader of the Easter Rising* (History Press, 2014); G. MacAtasney, *Tom Clarke, life, liberty, revolution* (Dublin, 2013); G. MacAtasney, *Sixteen lives: Seán MacDiarmada* (O'Brien Press, 2014); Shane Kenna, *Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, unrepentant Fenian* (Dublin, 2015); R.R. Kenneally & L. McDiarmid (eds.), *The vibrant house, Irish writing and domestic space* (Dublin, 2017); John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil and Mike Murphy (eds. and cartographer), *Atlas of the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2017).
31 Linda Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish revolution* (Dublin, 2020); Liz Gillis, *Women of the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2014); J. Knirck, *Women of the Dáil* (Dublin, 2006); Cal McCarthy, *Cumann na mBan and the Irish revolution* (Cork, 2007); R. Taillon, *When history was made; The women of 1916* (Belfast, 1996).
32 S. McCoole, *Easter widows* (Doubleday Ireland, 2014); S. McCoole, *No ordinary women, Irish female activists in the revolutionary years 1900-1923* (Dublin, 2003); Ann Matthews, *Renegades, Irish republican women 1900-1922* (Cork, 2010).

imprisonment. Ward makes great use of Clarke's writing in *In their own voice.*[33] Maume discusses the marginalisation of women of the revolution after 1916, and quotes Owen Dudley Edwards's remark that while Stalin had threatened to appoint someone else to the role of Lenin's widow, de Valera had actually done so, by replacing Clarke with Margaret Pearse as a Fianna Fáil mascot. [34]

Clarke's political life is referenced in Jones's history of the Irish Women Workers' Union (I.W.W.U.), and Ryan & Ward's *Irish women and the vote.* [35] Finally, in this brief survey, one of the most recent publications is *Women and the decade of commemorations.* [36] Clarke is mentioned four times, in different articles, each time as an official 'widow' wheeled out at commemorations to talk about her man. Certainly she did do so, both after the Rising and for the fiftieth anniversary commemoration, but to reduce her to this is a pity, particularly after the publication of *Revolutionary woman*. Her 1918 imprisonment is the only other mention of her in this volume.

In relation to the 1937 Constitution, where Clarke played a prominent part in opposition to its promulgation, her name is not mentioned in historical accounts. Indeed in any modern discussion of women's rights, her name does not arise at all, although she was almost kicked out of Fianna Fáil for her stance on the Constitution. She would not have described herself as a feminist, but supported many feminist causes. I think she saw 'feminism' as embracing suffragism, but while she hoped for women to win voting rights, she subsumed that under the drive for Irish independence. She probably supported the 'soft' feminism of the Irish Housewives' Association or the Irish Countrywomen's Association, who worked with existing civil society, but she never joined such a group.

I think *Revolutionary woman* was at first taken as a true and accurate account, without any attempt at putting forward an agenda, but over the decades a more nuanced view of it has emerged as other, sometimes contradictory, accounts are published. Researching for this

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33 Margaret Ward, *In their own voice* (Dublin, 1995). O'Brien Press wanted to charge a large sum of money for the right to quotes but I insisted that the whole point of publishing the memoir was that it would be used in such a book. Mutual agreement was reached.
34 Patrick Maume, 'Survivors; the afterlife of the Easter rising in lives of its participants' in A.M. White & J. Quinn (eds.), *1916, portraits and lives* (Dublin, 2015), pp. 313-328.
35 M. Jones, *These obstreperous lassies, a history of the I.W.W.U.* (Dublin, 1988); L. Ryan & M. Ward, *Irish Women and the vote, becoming citizens* (Dublin, 2007).
36 Oona Frawley (ed.), *Women and the decade of commemorations* (Indiana, 2021).

project, I sometimes found that *Revolutionary woman* was not listed in a modern bibliography where I would have expected to see it, and I wondered if it was being seen as outdated or polemical, or simply too partisan to be relied on. But it has, for example, been very recently quoted by Ó Corráin and Hanley in their volume on Cathal Brugha, so it is still being used, just perhaps with more circumspection.[37] A section of the memoir, that dealing with the campaign against the Treaty, and leading up to the entry of Fianna Fáil to the Dáil, has been reproduced in Volume V of the *Field Day anthology of Irish writing*.[38]

Regardless, her contribution to Ireland's history is still not widely recognised. In 2006, Wim Harrington, a former Limerick City councillor, wrote to the *Irish Times* complaining that in their recent supplement on the Easter Rising (28 March), there was no reference to Kathleen Clarke, 'a Limerick woman who paid a very heavy price because of the support both she and her husband, Tom, gave to the cause of the Republic...I could not let this opportunity pass without bringing into the public domain her contribution to these momentous events'.[39]

Kathleen's choice of material

None of the public controversies Clarke became involved in is mentioned in the memoir; she clearly did not want to burden the reader with ambiguity, or reveal that her account was sometimes contradicted. By the 1940s, a number of her contemporaries had died, but there is no doubt that she expected controversy on its publication. It was only later that she decided to embargo it until after her death. The memoir includes very few dates, which can be confusing; if I were editing it again, I would insert more in order to guide the reader more efficiently.

Clarke wished to appear as a particular type of revolutionary, committed, unyielding, 'keeper of the flame', but compared with, for example, Mary MacSwiney, who forgave no backsliding, Clarke did bend with the changing times. She followed de Valera into the Dáil, although she had been one of the most vehement speakers against the Oath during the Treaty debates. Reluctant to attend the early commemorations of the Easter Rising, because the general public could not visit the graves in Arbour Hill, she ultimately attended these ceremonies. She applied for a pension in the 1920s, when many anti-Treaty diehards utterly

37 D. Ó Corráin & G. Hanley, *Cathal Brugha, 'An indomitable spirit'* (Dublin, 2022).
38 A. Bourke et al. (eds.), *Field Day anthology of Irish writing*, Vol. V (Cork 2002), pp. 148-50.
39 Wim Harrington, Letter, 'Supplement on 1916 Rising', *Irish Times*, 4 April 2006.

refused to recognise the Irish Free State.

Clarke seems to have made little or no use of documentary evidence, or of interviews with other protagonists. Some published articles and interviews were becoming available by the 1940s, but they were not cited by her. A good deal of material had been destroyed during military raids on her own home, and those of other family members, but she states in the Prologue for *Revolutionary woman* that she had been trained by the I.R.A. to memorise details instead of recording them, for fear of discovery.[40] Ultimately, she wrote her own account in her own way, and dared people to disagree with her.

Clarke never saw herself as a political animal, but she did not survive more than twenty years in the angry politics of that time by being naive. She was one of the '1916 Widows', wheeled out for her recollections on every notable anniversary, but she did not see this as a reason to be silent and accepting of state policies. She gave interviews and answered questions about her martyred husband, but was not slow to give her opinion of other leaders such as Pearse, about whom she was very cutting. She could never understand why being a member of a political party meant you had to obey all its policies without question, and was undoubtedly a thorn in the side of many apparatchiks.

One major set-piece in the memoir is her 1918 imprisonment in Holloway Jail, to which she devotes a whole chapter. She shared this with Maud Gonne MacBride and Countess Markievicz, and Brendan Kennelly once assured me that this scenario would make a great stage or radio play. Indeed, actor and playwright Jessica Freed is now working to put together a stage play on this episode. Clarke also gives space to her time as Lord Mayor of Dublin, seeing it as a step towards a greater role for women in politics. There have only been eleven woman mayors in the eighty-two years since her last term of office, but there have been three women in the last three years, so perhaps the pendulum has swung sufficiently at last. Her breakthrough in this office was finally acknowledged by Dublin City Council on 29 September 2022, when I was delighted to attend the unveiling of a full-length portrait of Clarke as Lord Mayor, painted by Gareth Reid, which now hangs in the Council Chamber, City Hall, facing a portrait of Daniel O'Connell.

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40 Kathleen Clarke, Revolutionary woman: Kathleen Clarke 1878-1972 (Dublin 1991), p.8.

Kathleen Clarke was a sister of my grandmother, and I think she was a great woman. I hope I can persuade readers of this thesis to agree with me.

CHAPTER 1

A REVOLUTIONARY UPBRINGING

Kathleen Daly Clarke was born in Limerick city on 11 April 1878, the third child of Edward Daly, a lath-splitter in Spaight's Timber Yard, and Catharine O'Mara, of Ballingarry, Co. Limerick.

Edward came of a strongly nationalist family. The family tradition was that they were descended from the Ó Dálaigh family of County Sligo, and had arrived in Limerick from Galway. His grandfather John was reputed to have taken part in the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion, and his father, also John, was a strong supporter of Daniel O'Connell's Repeal movement. This John married Margaret Hayes on 3 February 1833 in St Michael's parish, Limerick, and they had seven children. A son and a daughter died in childhood of cholera (probably during the Great Famine) and two other sons, James and Michael, emigrated in the 1850s to Australia, ultimately settling in New Caledonia, a French protectorate in the Pacific. The young Edward, his older brother (another John) and his sister Ellen were of more radical mind than their father. Both young men joined the Fenians, an oath-bound group which espoused the use of physical force to win Ireland's independence from Britain. John Daly had started work aged thirteen, and by eighteen was working with his father at James Harvey and Sons, also as a lath-splitter, a skilled trade. He joined the Fenians in 1865, and was astonished to find his younger brother Edward there before him. He recalls his shock when he was refused absolution in confession, having revealed that he was a member of an oath-bound organisation.

The two brothers took part in the 1867 Fenian uprising. Edward was briefly imprisoned, and John escaped to the U.S.A.[41] Arriving in New York in 1867, he worked in a white-lead factory, as a railway company carpenter, and as a railway brakesman, travelling up and down east coast America, but settled finally in New York, where he worked as a labourer. He also kept in contact with Clan na Gael, the American arm of the Fenians.

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41 Kathleen's uncle John was a very interesting character, and probably deserves a book of his own. Many details of his life can be found in an unpublished memoir written by Louis Le Roux, now held in the University of Limerick. Called 'The Life and letters of John Daly', it was heavily influenced by Daly's family. An unpublished biography was compiled by Éamon de hÓir (Dore), who married John's niece Nora in 1918. It is based on Le Roux's work, but also on a series of biographical articles written by Daly himself, 'Recollections of Fenianism', *Irish Freedom*, February 1912 to March 1913. Daly's niece Nóra de hÓir wrote a brief biography of John Daly in Irish, 'Seán Ó Dálaigh, duine a mhair ar son na hÉireann', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, Vol XXI, 1979, pp 39-50.

When a conditional amnesty was granted to Fenians in 1869, John returned to Ireland as County and District Centre for Connacht. He travelled around the country, as far north as Belfast, swearing members into the Fenian movement, now more widely known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.). In 1870 he moved to England, and spent two years as a superintendent in St George's mental asylum, Lewes, Sussex. The doctor here was Mark Ryan, a republican sympathiser who gave employment to several Fenians over the years; John's brother Edward inherited John's job in the asylum.

Edward married Catharine O'Mara in 1873. Although he settled down as a family man, he maintained his Fenian contacts. His first daughter was born in 1876, and Catharine went on to have seven more daughters (and one stillbirth)

Between 1875 and 1884 John toured England and Ireland, giving speeches and seeking more recruits. In 1878, in Dungannon, County Tyrone, John swore a young man called Tom Clarke into the IRB, a contact which was to mean a great deal to both of them in the future.

Returning to New York, John became engaged in plotting a dynamite campaign spearheaded by Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, a radical Fenian. In 1884 he was sent to England but was arrested in Birmingham with 'explosive devices' in his pockets. His imprisonment for treason, for life, was inevitable given a recent spate of I.R.B. bombings in England.

In 1884 Edward Daly was discharged from his job in St George's asylum after a police enquiry, and returned to Limerick; he had been meeting John clandestinely, and while working in Lewes had called himself Hayes, their mother's maiden name.

Sadly, Edward died suddenly in September 1890, aged forty-one, leaving Catharine pregnant with their tenth child. This was the long-awaited son, John Edward Daly, known as Ned. He was a frail child, and his mother and sisters surrounded him with cosseting during his childhood. The household included Edward's elderly mother Margaret and his sister Ellen, known as Lollie, as well as a young man called Jim Jones.[42]

One of Kathleen's most vivid memories of childhood is the work she did helping Jim Jones, then secretary of the Limerick Amnesty campaign, as they fought for John's release: 'I am sure I plagued him with my pleading to be allowed to help. In my imagination I was helping to free Uncle John and,

42 Jones had been adopted as an infant by Catharine, before she started her own family. His father, a ship's captain, had been instrumental in helping John Daly to escape to New York. When Jones senior died and his widow emigrated to the States, leaving her baby behind, the Daly family repaid their debt by adopting the child.

of course, Ireland'[43]. Her aunt Lollie, whose uncle had been a teacher, was a fount of information about Ireland's centuries-old fight for independence, particularly about the Fenians, and had imbued the children with an intense loyalty to their country's cause. Their mother was equally committed: a letter from Jones to Daly says that Catharine 'still hums the Marseillaise in French for the baby'. The same letter, keeping John informed on the family, says 'Kathleen [aged 11] is very tall, not overstrong and a fair and easy child'.[44]

At least twice during his imprisonment, John's family were called upon to come to the prison in haste (a long and taxing journey) because his health had deteriorated, once in 1886 and again in 1888. The second time it was because he had been administered a dose of belladonna by mistake, according to the authorities, and it was a miracle he survived. The stress and strain of these emergencies, coupled with the intense efforts devoted to the cause of having his brother released, probably contributed to the early death of Edward, aged forty-one, in September 1890. This plunged the family into a financial crisis. At his death he had been a weighmaster for the Limerick Harbour Board, but had been suffering from a heart condition for some time, and his job was later referred to as 'a sinecure'. A report in the *Munster News* showed that the Harbour Board, 'by giving him lengthened leave, showed their appreciation of his faithfulness to duty, but all was of no avail...By his early death he has left a large and helpless family almost totally unprovided for...It is well known that the services of the Dalys have ever been given freely in the cause of fatherland'. [45] A public meeting in the Town Hall on 17 September established a sub-committee to collect for the 'Edward Daly Family Sustentation Fund', and this ultimately collected an amount equivalent to about £10,000 today.

Edward Daly junior, Edward and Catharine's tenth child, was born on 25 February 1891, at 22 Frederick Street (now O'Curry Street). The three eldest girls, Eileen, Madge and Kathleen, had had to take on heavier family responsibilities after their father's death, considering their mother's condition. Catharine found it difficult at first to care for the baby; as Kathleen wrote, 'she seemed resentful that there was no father to whom she could present this little son. Then, gradually, she became absorbed in him...'.[46] The Sustentation Fund enabled the family to buy a public house in Shannon Street, and an advertisement was put in the *Munster News*: 'Mrs Edward Daly begs to announce to her numerous friends and the general public that she has just re-opened the Old Established Bar, No. 3 Shannon Street, where she hopes to be favoured with their patronage and support'.[47] However, the business was not a success, and closed after about a year. The family had no experience in the trade, and they found

43 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 15.
44 National Archives, Kew, Home Office papers 144/925/A46664/28.
45 *Munster News*, 10 September 1890.
46 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 21.
47 *Munster News*, 19 December 1891.

that their sympathisers were very supportive in visiting the bar, but less so in paying off the 'slates' they ran up.

Mrs Catharine Daly and her sister-in-law Lollie had had a thriving dressmaking business, but lost their most respectable customers with the notoriety of John Daly's arrest and imprisonment. They probably carried on this profession, and the older girls worked as shop assistants or sold craftwork. Madge, regarded as the brightest of the family, stayed on longer at school as a pupil-teacher, but the others left at about fourteen years of age. They all attended the Presentation Convent, Sexton Street; their mother washed their pinafores every night, concerned that their appearance would not let the family down.[48]

As noted above, two of the Daly brothers had emigrated to Australia, but ultimately settled in New Caledonia, a French protectorate. Here they had prospered as traders and sheep-farmers, and established families; hundreds of French-speaking Dalys on the island have descended from these two brothers. Hearing of his brother's untimely death and the difficulties of his family, James Daly, whose own family was reared, returned to Limerick to do what he could for them. He arrived in 1894, and bought 'Clonlong', a large house on the Tipperary road. Two of his nieces worked in Cannock's department store, and Kathleen was apprenticed to a dressmaker. She was a talented piano player, and was interested in pursuing a musical career, but James refused to pay for it – he had paid for a daughter's musical training, and it had all been wasted. It seems hard on Kathleen for such an example to be used against her, but she buckled down to the dressmaking, and also became a tailor. She trained with a Mrs Daly (no relation) who had a large dressmaking business in Limerick city centre. Sadly, soon after James's arrival Jim Jones died, aged twenty-six, probably from cholera. This was a massive shock to all of them, particularly Aunt Lollie, who had reared him as if he was her own child.

Meanwhile John Daly languished in prison, first in Chatham and, from 1891, in Portland prison. The conditions for Fenian prisoners were harsh, although it has been argued that they were not so very different from the rest of the prison population. Certainly, the Amnesty campaign worked very hard to convince the Irish public that the conditions were inhumane, and Jones was banned from visiting Daly because of an article he wrote after one visit which highlighted Daly's complaints. Solitary confinement was a frequent punishment for breaching regulations, the diet was poor, the prison work was laborious and repetitive, visits were strictly controlled, and correspondence was heavily censored. Prisoners were forbidden to touch or speak to one another. The environment was one of severe sensory deprivation, and many of the prisoners became insane after years of this treatment.

48 Family sources.

One of the saving graces of Daly's imprisonment was the presence of the young man he had sworn into the I.R.B. years previously, Tom Clarke. Clarke had been tried and convicted of treason in 1883, having been followed by detectives when he arrived in Birmingham from New York. He had been part of another I.R.B. bombing conspiracy, and was arrested with an india-rubber bag containing nitroglycerine. He recognized Daly when the latter arrived in Chatham, along with James Egan, a fellow conspirator, and the three of them formed a circle of friendship which did much to preserve them from the worst consequences of the prison regime. Despite the ban on contact, they communicated through a form of Morse code, and smuggled notes to one another, written on toilet paper with scraps of lead.

John Daly left prison on 15 July 1896, because he went on hunger-strike and his health was severely threatened. He was released 'under licence', which banned him from any political activity under threat of rearrest, and arrived back to Limerick in September after a period of recuperation in London and Paris. He was absorbed into the crowded household in Clonlong, much to the delight of his mother, who had despaired of ever seeing him again. He was described on his release as having 'a nervous and excitable manner, and appearing prematurely aged, unable to step out with confidence'[49]. Kathleen's memoir states, 'Big changes had taken place in the world since he had gone to prison, enough to bewilder him, and for a time he could not think what to do'. [50] However, as a highly publicised martyr for the republican cause, he was encouraged to begin a series of talks and public meetings in support of the Amnesty campaign, both in Britain and Ireland.

John's return caused a shift in the family dynamics, not necessarily adding to domestic felicity. He often argued with his sister-in-law Catharine and had old-fashioned ideas about how his nieces and nephew should behave. They delighted in circumventing his discipline by climbing out windows at night, to attend dances and other entertainments. More importantly, it was axiomatic in the family that two Daly males could not live together, and this was exacerbated by politics – James was a constitutional nationalist, and had no time for his brother's more militant views. Madge Daly's memoir recalls a visit James made to John in prison: 'We all met him...anxious to hear the latest about our idol, but we could only get from him that Uncle John was mad, that he had refused all food for a long time, and was dying'. This must have been shortly before John was released. [51]

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49 *Limerick Leader*, 21 August 1896.
50 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 25.
51 Madge Daly, unpublished memoir, U.L., Glucksman Library, P2/267/4a.

The *Limerick Leader* stated on 6 September 1897 that James Daly was lying ill in London, and being visited by his brother John. A later notice described James's return to Limerick, but according to the *Limerick Weekly Echo* in March 1898, 'Mr James Daly left during the week for Australia. He carries with him the best wishes of a large number of friends in this city'. James died in Noumea, New Caledonia, in December 1900. It is noteworthy that Kathleen's memoir makes no reference to James's departure or death. After all, he had spent four years living in the family circle, and had spent generously on a family that had so desperately needed his support. He paid for her to be apprenticed as a dressmaker, and she ultimately set up her own business.[52]

When James left, his money went with him, and John had several dependent family members now looking to him. He had already been working for the Amnesty campaign in cities such as Newcastle, Liverpool and Glasgow. Intelligence reports were sent to Dublin Castle and Scotland Yard about his seditious and rabble-rousing speeches, but no move was made to arrest him or make him adhere to the terms of his licence, probably because of fears of public unrest. He now fixed on the idea of a lecture tour in the United States, primarily as a fund-raiser for the Amnesty campaign but also as a way of earning money himself. He contacted his old friend John Devoy, of Clan na Gael in New York, and sailed from Queenstown on 1 November 1897. Daly was accompanied on this tour by Maud Gonne, the English feminist and political activist whose charm and beauty had captivated Limerick when she campaigned for Daly's parliamentary nomination in 1893 (although elected, he was disqualified as a felon). Gonne was very active in the Amnesty campaign, and in the fight for land reform.[53]

The American tour was a huge success, visiting cities with large Irish populations such as Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia and Baltimore. Daly, a passionate speaker, won hearts with his emotional accounts of prison life under the British, and his pleas for the remaining prisoners to be set free.

He arrived back in Limerick in May 1898 with about £1000, financially secure at last – though presumably some of the money raised did go to the Amnesty movement. He had enough capital to start a business, and opened a baker’s shop on 26 William Street, with a bakery behind, and storage space for several horse-drawn delivery vans. A few of the Daly girls worked in the shop – Carrie specialised in confectionery, and in window-dressing – and were paid 2/6 per week. Kathleen, however, insisted on maintaining her independent dressmaking business, now doing very well;

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52 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, pp. 23-4.

53 Gonne's support for Daly, and her influence on his reputation, can be detected in a laudatory editorial in *La Patrie*, 17 August 1895, headed 'Un Martyr de la Patrie': 'Le député de Limerick ne siége pas encore en Parlement, son corps est brisé par toutes les tortures qu'il a endurées; mais son ame, fortifée par le magnifique témoignage d'admiration et de confiance qu'il a recu de ses concitoyens, est inébranlable.' This editorial was written by the politician and journalist Lucien Millevoye, who had had a relationship with Gonne and fathered two children with her, in 1891 and 1894.

besides, as she says, 'in the bakery I would be under the control of two older sisters'.[54] Agnes opened the shop every morning, walking in from Clonlong with eggs from their mother's chickens, but it was not long before the whole family moved in to William Street to live above the shop. The business prospered, and by 1912 a second branch had been opened in Sarsfield Street.

Daly involved himself in nationalist politics, fighting hard to win a seat on the City Council, but as a convicted felon his nomination was refused. However Limerick, a thriving port, had a very vigorous labour and trade union movement, and when Daly was blackballed from Shannon Rowing Club, a subscription was opened to provide him with his own boat. Following a torchlight procession to the Shannon, drawing the new boat on a four-horse wagon, Daly was ceremoniously presented with *Lua-Tagna* (Swift to Avenge). He became deeply involved in the centenary commemorations of the 1798 Rebellion, raising his profile even further, and spoke at meetings condemning Britain's involvement in the Boer War. R.I.C. reports to Dublin Castle appealed for some response to his aggressive statements, but no move was made. Reporting one meeting, John Morrow states that 'The general impression...is that J.D. has a large, rough following, and that the material for evil in Limerick is large'[55].

An extension to the franchise in 1884 meant that most male heads of households now had a vote, and Daly headed the local election poll in 1899, swept into office by a tide of artisan and labourer votes. He became Limerick's first nationalist mayor, serving three terms and retiring in 1902. His first act as mayor was to order the removal of the Royal Arms from the front of Limerick City Hall. His new link on the mayoral chain depicted two crossed pikes and a pair of handcuffs. As mayor, he turned the first sod for Limerick's electrical supply in 1902, and made an early suggestion of using the Shannon for electric power, although this was rejected as impractical. He was vilified by Limerick's horse cabbies and carters when he voted for the introduction of electric trams – he was clearly a moderniser. He presented the Freedom of Limerick to Maud Gonne and to James Egan, his old prison comrade. However, from the point of view of his niece Kathleen, the most important recipient of the Freedom of Limerick was to be his other close comrade, Tom Clarke.

Clarke left Portland Prison in September 1898, released on licence aged forty, and was reunited with his mother and sister Hannah in Dublin on 8 October. As one of the last of the Fenian prisoners to be released, he was much in demand for celebratory meetings, and was fêted as a martyr for Ireland. He was a shy and retiring man anyway, and this wave of public interest must have been completely overwhelming after fifteen years of close confinement. He had a massive reception in his home town, Dungannon, County Tyrone, but the loudest calls for his presence came from Limerick's mayor John

54 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 27.
55 National Archives, Kew, Colonial Office papers, 904/198, 26 November 1899.

Daly. Clarke travelled to Limerick on 2 March 1899, and was immediately welcomed into the crowded and noisy Daly family home. The girls greeted him as John's old friend, of course, but rapidly came to love him for himself, while he blossomed under the attention, revealing an unexpected sense of humour and a love of practical jokes.

One girl, however, attracted him more deeply than the others, and this attraction was reciprocated. In her memoir, Kathleen says she was disappointed in him at first: 'His appearance gave no indication of the kingly, heroic qualities which Uncle John had told us about; there was none of the conquering hero which I had visioned. He was emaciated and stooped from the long imprisonment and hardship....As I came to know him, his appearance receded into the background, and the man Uncle John had portrayed was revealed'. [56] When he went back to Dublin, they began to write to one another (an important step towards intimacy in those days), and when he spent part of the following summer with the family in Kilkee, County Clare, they became engaged. Both her mother and uncle were firmly opposed to the idea; Tom seemed prematurely aged, unlikely to find any kind of gainful employment, and Kathleen was only twenty years old. But she held her ground, and after a number of delays they finally married in 1901 in New York, where Tom renewed his contacts with Devoy and Clan na Gael.

This part of Kathleen's memoir is quite touching, because it is clear that they had a happy life in New York, both in the city, and in Long Island, where they moved on account of her health in 1907. She does not reveal how she felt about leaving her intense and crowded family life in Limerick, but there are hints in later letters that she found it rather a relief to be alone with Tom at last. She was always a private person, and found it irritating when her sisters asked impertinent questions and tried to read her letters. But in New York, 'I missed the chat, the laughter, the noise, and sometimes the quarrels, of the big family'. She must have had to adapt to enormous changes, living in such a huge and energetic city; Tom had already spent a number of years there, and presumably helped her to find her feet. They could only afford apartments in streets already crowded with immigrants like themselves, all living in cramped rooms on top of one another; she had to wear slippers in their flat because the people beneath complained of noise.[57] On her arrival, following her first trip on a subway, she was so bemused and excited that she left her bag on the train, losing all the money she had brought with her (mostly the profits of her dressmaking business). Tom must have been pretty distracted as well!

There were several ups and downs in relation to income; when Tom lost his job at Cameron Pump Works, Kathleen opened a small sweet shop in Greenpoint, helped by her savings and by her sister Madge. Overall, however, the life was congenial. They were together, and Tom was putting a lot of

56 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 31.
57 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 38.

energy into activities with Clan na Gael. Their first son, John Daly Clarke, always known as Daly, was born on 13 June 1902, and soon after Tom became general manager of Devoy's new enterprise, the *Gaelic American* newspaper. They moved from Greenpoint to Brooklyn, and were energetic in political campaigns such as that against a proposed Anglo-American alliance. Tom joined the military wing of Clan na Gael, and they often went into the country for rifle practice days. However, Kathleen's health had not fully recovered after Daly's birth, and she spent three months in a nursing home in New Jersey in 1904 for an unspecified illness – this may have been a miscarriage. Tom established a Brooklyn Gaelic Society, and Kathleen and Daly would attend the regular lectures, debates and social evenings. A letter from Devoy to Kathleen (29 July 1921), when Kathleen was trying to get a passport for Daly, told her that his birth had not been registered: 'The Health Department at that time was neglecting its duty'.[58] Devoy finally managed to trace a register for baptism, which was accepted.

In 1905 Daly contracted diphtheria, a very serious illness then; he was considered 'delicate' for the rest of his life. After his six weeks' quarantine, Kathleen and Daly travelled back to Limerick for three months' rest. She and Tom missed one another badly, and she found it very difficult to settle into life with her mother and sisters; they seemed inquisitive and intrusive, and her uncle John spoilt Daly very much. Returning to New York, she became ill again, and this time her doctor advised a move right out of the city. Tom left his job at the *Gaelic American*, and they moved to a market garden in Manorville, Long Island.

From the memoir, it is clear this was a really happy time, because Kathleen loved country life despite non-laying chickens, forest fires and large snakes – one of which threatened Daly until his father chopped it to bits with a spade.[59] Tom himself was really interested in gardening and horticulture, but they were not experienced in market gardening, and failed to make a success of the project. They were in debt already to Kathleen’s sister Madge and her uncle John – John's name was on the title deeds of the farm – and Tom began to consider going back to Ireland. His main motive, of course, was political; he could see that a war in Europe might be on the horizon, and had always believed that England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity. If England became embroiled in war with Germany, something might be done.

Kathleen was upset at the prospect of returning to Ireland and planning a revolution. She was content as they were, despite their debts, and knew their security would be at an end. Tom was a 'ticket-of-leave' man, and could be rearrested if accused of sedition. But she understood that this was the driving force in Tom's life, as indeed it was also for her, and in the end she was not able to go against his

58 N.L.I., Clarke papers, 39, 353/7/3.
59 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 45-8.

passionate need to fight the country that had imprisoned him: 'I told him that I did not want to go, I was very happy where I was, and thought that Ireland had treated him shamefully, but if it would make him happier to go back I would reluctantly consent. His happiness came first with me'.[60] She goes on to say that she was very happy herself at the thought of returning to Ireland, which implies that homesickness was ever present, but feared the consequences for Tom.

Tom was offered assistance by Devoy, who pledged to help him to build up the I.R.B. in Ireland again, and in November 1907 they sailed for Ireland. Tom headed for Dublin, and Kathleen and Daly settled back in Limerick. She was pregnant again, and from her letters to Tom was even more irritated than before at being back in the family home. She was worried about Daly getting even more spoilt; also, she had not had the nerve to tell the child that he would never be going back to Long Island, and hoped he would gradually forget it, though he became wildly excited at seeing some photographs of their farm. Daly had a brief illness in February, which seems to have been a bout of malaria.

Tom, with Madge's help, bought his first shop, a tobacconists', at 55 Amiens Street, Dublin, and the business began to thrive. He was greatly assisted by his sister Hannah, who already ran a tobacconist shop, and introduced him to the suppliers. Their second son, Tom, was born on 3 March 1908, but Kathleen did not move to Dublin until late summer. Tom was living behind the shop, and she was worried he was not looking after his health. His letters to her talk a great deal about his hopes for the new shop he is setting up, the shelving arrangements, the stock, as well as how much he is missing his wife. It can be difficult to reconcile these simple, enthusiastic letters with his later image as a cold, driven and committed revolutionary, but human beings are complicated creatures.[61]

In April 1908 the Daly family was devastated by the sudden death of Kathleen's sister Annie, aged twenty-one, from typhus, and when Tom and Kathleen returned from the funeral Tom came down with typhus himself. He spent some weeks in the Mater Hospital, while Kathleen ran the business with the help of her brother Ned.[62]

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60 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 49.
61 N.L.I., Clarke papers, MS 49,351/2.
62 Tom wrote to Devoy: 'I had a bad fit of sickness – typhoid fever and several other things...I accepted an invitation from John Daly to go and spend some weeks with him at one of the health resorts...We spent a couple of weeks (beside Queenstown) where I put on 7lbs to my weight', W. O'Brien and D. Ryan (eds.) *Devoy's post bag*, 2 vols (Dublin 1948) Vol. II, 25 September 1908, p. 366. However, Tom was soon more concerned about John's health: 'John Daly came very near dying a month ago. Gall stones and a touch of appendicitis...Jim Egan, too, nearly kicked the bucket – spent 7 weeks in hospital. Both are well over their sickness', *Devoy's post bag*, Vol. II, 19 December 1908 p. 374.

Meanwhile the baby Tom remained behind in Limerick, separated from his mother for at least a year. His grandmother doted on him, and found it very hard to let him go. It is clear that mother and son failed to bond, and Tom junior never really felt integrated in his family. This was not helped by the Limerick family threatening to send him up to his mother in Dublin if he misbehaved.

In 1909 Tom and Kathleen expanded the business into 75a Parnell Street, and this tiny shop became the centre of planning for the Easter Rising in 1916. In 1910 they closed 55 Amiens Street and re-opened in number 77, where they lived overhead. Their third son, Emmet, was born on 13 August 1909. These years laid the foundation for great changes in Irish life and politics, and a growing conviction that only a physical rebellion could bring real independence to Ireland.

This is the background to Kathleen Clarke's life. Her upbringing in a fervently nationalist atmosphere, dominated by the mercurial personality of John Daly, and her passionate commitment to a life shared with one of the most dedicated revolutionaries Ireland has ever produced, led to a long and astonishing career in politics, at a time when few women could or would have followed such a path.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE, 1916-1926

When Kathleen Clarke took her first steps into a political career, women were slowly making ground in the democratic politics of western Europe, including Ireland. As MacCurtain delineates,[63] Anna Haslam founded an Irish Suffrage Society as early as 1876; established by Quakers, it soon spread more widely. In 1896 the Women's Poor Law Guardian Bill and, in 1898, a local government bill, opened a wider range for women's involvement, although more social than political. By 1899, eighty-five women had been elected as Poor Law guardians, and thirty-one of these were also Rural District Councillors. Other changes were being made; the Intermediate Act of 1878 had opened higher education to women, with full equality at third level being guaranteed in 1909, following the Robertson Commission. Meanwhile Irishwomen continued to fight for real political influence; in 1908 Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Margaret Cousins founded the Irish Women's Franchise League, and Louie Bennett followed in 1911 with the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation. 1911 also saw the establishment of the Irish Women Workers' Union, as women became more important in the industrial workplace.

The Irish Parliamentary Party was reluctant to support the women's suffrage movement. John Redmond, its leader, asserted that it would increase the power of the clergy, but it seems he was more concerned that women would vote overwhelmingly for the Conservative Party. Sinn Féin, although in principle more modern-minded, was also cautious on the matter. The spread of women's franchise was gradual; it was initially opened for county and borough councillors, and women began to be elected in these roles. Wider enfranchisement had to wait until the Representation of the People Act 1918, when women over the age of thirty received the vote.

As Kearns has written, the mobilisation of men for battle 'may also open a wider range of social roles for women. In times of political crisis from the 1880s onwards, the arrest and imprisonment of male activists periodically left women in charge of the nationalist movement'.[64] A notable example was that

63 Margaret MacCurtain & Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Women in Irish society, the historical dimension* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 46ff.
64 G. Kearns, 'Mother Ireland and the revolutionary sisters', *Cultural Geographies*, Vol II No. 4, October 2004, pp. 443-67.

of Anna Parnell, who successfully organised the Ladies' Land League (1881-2) when her brother Charles was imprisoned, temporarily abandoning his own Land League. For her pains, she was sidelined when he was released, and the Ladies' Land League was suppressed. This pattern, of successful activity followed by deliberate oblivion, was to be repeated frequently in the history of Irish women activists in the twentieth century.

Cumann na mBan

When Clarke lived in New York between 1901 and 1907, she took Irish classes, attended Clan na Gael entertainments, and for some time ran a small sweetshop. However, her first real experience of dealing with people and organisations dates from her time as Chair of the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan, the women's auxiliary to the Irish Volunteers, founded in 1914, although as a busy mother, housekeeper and shopkeeper, she probably delegated many of her Chairperson responsibilities.

Central Branch organised lectures, first aid classes, signalling and rifle practice. Fundraising was central to their activities, and involved whist drives, sales of work and dances. Cumann na mBan recruited members from other feminist organisations, some of which were divided on the question of support for the First World War, but all pulled together to support the Irish Volunteers. As Louie Bennett wrote later, '...so urgent, so important was the work of the Volunteers, that we could not afford to divide. Everything was put aside and we were ready to do what we were told: carry messages, give first aid, make meals, in short any work'.[65] Strong feminists such as Hanna Sheehy Skeffington objected to the formation of Cumann na mBan, seeing it as a second-rate copy of the Volunteers: 'Hanna held us to be poor feminists – worse, in fact, as being servile to men...it was the men who were doing the dying. But we were not servile in the sense that we kept our own organisation intact. Cumann na mBan was part of the defence forces of the Republic'.[66]

One specific activity which Clarke spearheaded was the publication of a series of pamphlets on Irish revolutionaries, sold for a penny each. She says they were a great success, and sold in thousands; the first was written by Patrick Pearse, on Wolfe Tone. This precipitated a row with the Executive of Cumann na mBan, who had not authorised the project, but they had previously agreed that each branch should work out its own activities, and Clarke refused to hand over the profitable scheme to them. Her son Emmet wrote to me: 'Mrs McNeil [sic] and Mrs Wyse-Power came as a delegation to stop that

65 MacCurtain & Ó Corráin, *Women in Irish society*, p. 52.
66 Máire Comerford, *On dangerous ground* (Dublin, 2021), p. 90.

activity as it was too ambitious for a Branch. We were living over the shop in Parnell Street and my mother was in the kitchen baking bread. I remember that I came in demanding the toilet'.[67]

Clarke was very annoyed at the mood of jingoism which swept Dublin at the outbreak of the First World War, when every second person seemed to be wearing a red, white and blue badge. She describes buying ribbon and making green, white and orange badges, selling them in the shop for one penny each. The first hundred sold out in a day, and Liberty Hall took over production from her a short time later. 'Gradually the Union Jacks disappeared, and the orange, white and green took their place'.[68] These are probably the ribbons referred to in a letter from Tom to Devoy: 'In connection with the discussion to adopt a badge for the Lady Volunteers [Cumann na mBan], she [Kathleen] submitted a combination bow badge – orange and green on the wings with white in the centre. Having explained the symbolical meaning of the badge as indicating one of the basic principles of their organisation, the badge was adopted unanimously'.[69]

When John Redmond MP called in September 1914 for the Irish Volunteers to join the First World War, on the British side, the Volunteer movement split, and so did Cumann na mBan. A 6 October meeting of Central Branch, Cumann na mBan, voted in favour of a manifesto issued by the Provisional Executive, which had called on Irishmen 'to remain in their own country and join the army of the Irish Volunteers'. A number of members resigned after the vote, and a later meeting in November confirmed it. Clarke says, 'Central Branch went down from about two hundred members to about two dozen'.[70]

Despite her various responsibilities, Clarke could be quite hands-on with her Cumann na mBan women. She was a trained tailor, and Peig Conlon recalls, 'Some of us made our own uniforms. Mrs Clarke gave us instructions about cutting them out. She cut out mine'. However, Eilís ní Chonaill (née Ryan) states that when she was elected vice-president of the Central branch in 1917, and Clarke was elected president, 'Mrs Clarke did not attend very regularly owing to imprisonment and ill-health'.[71] After the Rising, and Clarke's subsequent miscarriage, her activities in relation to Cumann na mBan would have been curtailed, and she was by then deeply engaged with the I.N.A.&V.D.F. (see page 49).

Prior to the Rising, Clarke held a very responsible position in relation to the disbursement of money sent over by Clan na Gael from New York. She and Tom laid out this money carefully, for the aims

67 Letter, Emmet Clarke to Helen Litton, 1990 (n.d.).
68 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p.70.
69 Clarke to Devoy, 15 May 1914, *Devoy's post bag* Vol. II, p. 446.
70 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 69.
71 Conlon, B.M.H. WS 0419, p.2; ní Chonaill, B.M.H. WS 0568, p.20.

intended; it was never confused with their domestic or shop finances. Her role is illustrated in many witness statements: [72]

Joseph O'Rourke: 'Tom paid for this lot by writing an order to Mrs Clarke on a paper snuff bag, which I duly presented to Mrs Clarke in Richmond Road. She asked me would it be OK in cash and gave me between £500 and £600...'

Gregory Murphy: 'I was also instructed to get money from Tom Clarke for the expenses of the couriers to go to the country. I went to Tom Clarke at his home...and on his instructions Mrs Clarke gave me the money. It amounted to about £300...'

Máire Foley: 'At the end of the week [Easter Week, 1916] the soldiers made a thorough search of Newgrove Avenue where we lived...I had a big bundle of notes which Mícheál Ó Foghludha had given me to mind. I think it was about £500...Mícheál told me this money had been given him by Tom Clarke some time before the Rising, and having collected the money from me...he handed it over to Mrs Clarke...'

In relation to the money passed around in this very casual manner, what is notable is the extent of trust, and the absolute honesty of the couriers. Any of these bundles of cash could provide a decent living for someone who simply headed to the Dún Laoghaire ferry and disappeared, but there is no evidence that any money went astray apart from one episode after the Rising.[73]

Kathleen Clarke also provided other assistance, as related by Frank Burke: 'In connection with our "bomb"-making, the question of collecting a sufficient number of empty containers was very important. We had soon used up all the empty tins that had accumulated over a long period in the College premises [St Enda's]. I remember being sent by P.H. Pearse over to Tom Clarke's house...to collect a case full which Mrs Clarke had in readiness'.[74] Clarke may not have felt herself strong enough to carry a gun, but she would do whatever it took to help Ireland's fight for independence, and was ruthless to that end.

The story of the Easter Rising does not need rehearsing here. Arrested herself, Clarke was brought from Dublin Castle to say goodbye to Tom before his execution. Bridget Foley, imprisoned with her, wrote, 'Mrs Clarke could speak of nothing but the coming execution of the leaders, which she was

72 O'Rourke, B.M.H. WS 1244, p. 8; Murphy, B.M.H. WS 0150, p. 7; Foley, B.M.H. WS 0539, pp. 4-5.
73 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 180-1.
74 Burke, B.M.H. WS 0694, p.2.

convinced would take place. At 2am she was summoned...'.[75] When all was over, Kathleen had lost both her husband Tom and her brother Ned to execution, and experienced a miscarriage some weeks later.

The I.N.A.&.VD.F.

Clarke writes: 'All Commandants had been instructed to tell their men that in case of necessity [after the Rising], their women were to come to me for help, and each Commandant was to draw up a list of the families of men under his command who would be needing help'.[76] Immediately after the first executions, she says, she formed the first committee of the Irish Republican Prisoners Dependents Fund. She describes how Tom had come from a meeting of the I.R.B. Supreme Council, at which it had been decided to select 'some person whose discretion, silence and capability they could rely upon...who would be made fully acquainted with all their decisions...thus preventing confusion and temporary stoppage', and that they had chosen her to take this responsible position'.[77] This is also referenced in Le Roux's biography of Tom Clarke: 'These men realised that their course of action meant probable death, and that it would be wise to leave someone behind who could clear up the aftermath. On the proposal of Denis McCullough and Joseph Gleeson, Mrs Kathleen Clarke was chosen...' [78] It was probably also felt that a woman was less likely to be arrested.

Kearns writes, 'Each [1916] leader had a “ghost”, and Tom's ghost was Kathleen...It was to her that Devoy and the others should refer and defer to in Tom's absence. Kathleen knew everything – the chain of command, the bank accounts, the military strategy and the fact that the Rising was only likely to prevail for a short time'.[79] This tribute probably owes a lot to Clarke's assessment of her own importance, but of course there is very little evidence on either side to confirm or deny it. A few other women also subsequently stated that they had been sworn into the I.R.B., but you were meant to keep this a secret until death, so it is impossible to quantify the extent of women's involvement there.

Simultaneously with the I.N.A.&V.D.F., Clarke's role as conduit for Clan na Gael/I.R.B. funds continued after the Rising. She recounts just one example of money going astray, and her

75 Foley, B.M.H. WS 0398, p. 14.
76 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p.154.
77 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 85-6.
78 Louis Le Roux, Tom Clarke and the Irish freedom movement (Dublin, 1936) p. 186.
79 Kearns, 'Mother Ireland and the revolutionary sisters', p. 451.

disappointment with the man who had taken it, but even so she forgave him, as he had been badly wounded during the fighting.[80] Again, witness statements illustrate her activities:

Michael O'Sullivan: '...during the summer of 1917 I went...to Limerick to contact Mrs Tom Clarke to get some funds to send Donal Hannigan, who was wanted by the authorities for the shooting of a D.I. of the R.I.C....out of the country...The necessary funds, £50, were made available by Mrs Clarke and arrangements were made to get Donal away to the U.S.A., which he reached in due course.'

Garry Holohan: 'At the surrender Paddy [Holohan] got away and was sheltered by the local priest [in Ashtown]. He was then sent to America by Mrs Clarke to John Devoy to give him all the news. He stowed away on an oil tanker...'[81]

Clarke's earliest experience of the manoeuvring needed to survive in a political world was the bringing together of two competing franchises, both seeking to aid needy dependants. Hers was the Irish Volunteer Dependents' Fund, largely run by bereaved women of the Rising, and she believed the other, the Irish National Aid Association, was under the control of unionist sympathisers and constitutional nationalists. Deeply suspicious about using money which might have come from English sources, she insisted that the families of Volunteers would never accept money under these circumstances. Compromise was not a word in her vocabulary, and she won this battle mainly by sticking firmly to her position, refusing to move even when strongly pressured by an emissary from Clan na Gael in New York. This was seen by some as sheer bloody-mindedness, compounded by bitterness and loss: Geraldine Plunkett Dillon later wrote of her, 'Mrs Clarke was always stubborn and refused to listen to reason'.[82] Competition was intense; Kitty O'Doherty recalls that Min Ryan, of the National Aid, had returned from the U.S.A. without any fund-raising success. 'I heard that she had asked Mrs Clarke for an introduction to John Devoy but had not got it. Her mission was a failure...'.[83]

New York was alerted to the problem by a letter to Devoy from Mary MacSwiney in June 1916, supporting the I.N.A.A.: 'Mrs Tom Clarke naturally enough feels very bitterly about the situation. She has lost her husband...and her brother. She makes no allowances for the difficulties of the other counties, and thinks they should have supported Dublin. As a result, she is making a separate appeal for funds of the dependents of those *who actually fought*. It is a pity, but there will not be any clash. I know the two Committees will see to that...'[84] Clarke and MacSwiney had a history of disagreement.

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80 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 180-1.
81 O'Sullivan, B.M.H. WS 1186, p. 9; Holohan, B.M.H. WS 0328.
82 G. Plunkett Dillon, *All in the blood* (Dublin, 2006), p. 250.
83 B.M.H. WS 0355, p. 31.
84 MacSwiney to Devoy, *Devoy's post bag*, Vol II, June 1916, p. 494.

MacSwiney had opposed any contact with Germany before the Rising, and afterwards argued vehemently with Clarke about the leaders' plans, complaining that all the arms had been kept in Dublin, leaving Cork helpless, and that the executed men had been nothing short of murderers. Clarke knew this was not true, and that the main problem had been the loss of the arms which should have been landed in Kerry.[85]

MacSwiney's letter to Devoy rather misrepresents the I.V.D.F., but Devoy thought it best to send an envoy, John Archdeacon Murphy, to discuss the matter with Clarke, without success. She had been taken ill again, and was just getting over an urgent operation, but nothing would change her mind. In a later interview, Clarke reminisced that Murphy called her the 'damndest devil of a woman he had ever met in his life'. In the same interview she recalled that Lorcan Sherlock, chair of the I.N.A.A., announced that he'd be damned if he'd get off any committee for any woman.[86] But since Clarke was rapidly becoming that iconic figure, A Widow Of 1916, it was clear that it would look bad to attack her. It is unlikely that she deliberately set out to achieve this status, but the public was learning more about the Easter Rising, its leaders, its plans and its Proclamation, as the nationalist propaganda drum was beating louder and louder. Her name would have come more and more into focus along with her husband's, and his position as first signatory of the Proclamation. Tom was always a quiet background figure, and Kathleen began in this way also, but gradually found herself in the foreground, and obviously decided to use this 'soft power' to the best advantage for the cause in which they both believed.

The amalgamation was finally agreed almost entirely on Clarke's terms. She could not attend the meeting which agreed this, through illness, but was represented by her equally determined sister Madge. It was a stormy meeting, but an executive committee was elected, with three members of the Dublin Trades Council to guarantee that Irish Citizen Army dependents would also be cared for. The amalgamation was proposed by Madge Daly, representing Mrs Clarke, and was carried unanimously.There were to be seven honorary secretaries, and a Ladies Distribution Committee; the I.V.D.F. accounts were audited, and all funds handed over to the joint board of what was now the Irish National Aid and Volunteers Dependents' Fund (I.N.A.&V.D.F.). Sister committees were established in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow.

85 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 71.
86 Interview with Fr Louis O'Kane, 1968, typescript in family sources.

The amalgamation was fortuitous for the V.D.F., as its fundraising efforts had not been as successful as those of the I.N.A., which was apparently supported by Roman Catholic priests, and nationalists who would not necessarily support armed republicanism. '[B]y 30 June [1916], the I.N.A.A. had collected almost four times the amount of money that the I.V.D.F. had...Clearly the I.V.D.F. had been sidelined by a wider and more extensive body, and as both bodies were engaged in similar work anyway, the most sensible solution was a merger of the two'.[87]

A draft letter from accountants at 13 Westmoreland Street, dated 12 April 1917, to the committee of the I.N.A.A., 10 Exchequer Street, gives a statement of accounts for 1916. Between May and August the I.N.A.A. took in £13,414 15s 1d, which with interest came to £13,435 14s 3d.[88] The amount distributed during these months was £9,021 5s 6d, with office expenditure of £688 11s 9d. Interestingly, it is noted that every £1 of aid distributed cost 18s 3d in printing and stationery, which seems a high percentage. However, these costs rapidly reduced, so were probably due to the initial costs of setting up the system. When the groups amalgamated, the total amount in the bank from August 1916 to February 1917 came to £67,557 4s 8d, with interest of £292 3s 1d. Grants, etc, paid out amounted to £28,939 18s 4d, with expenses of £1,118 4s 6d. The I.V.D.F. had raised £13,415 and the I.N.A.A. £14, 459.[89] Some of the grants might seem unexpected to us now, such as a ciborium bought for the chapel of Lewes Prison, costing £4 3s 2d.

The name of the fundraising group had been altered because the I.V.D.F. had been having difficulties with the authories about its title and activities. A document from General Maxwell, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Ireland, dated 22 June 1916, bans a planned Public Flag Day collection on 25 June, because 'it is proposed that said Flags shall contain portraits of persons who have been in rebellion against His Majesty the King', and that this activity would be likely to cause disaffection amongst the civilian population, and to prejudice recruitment to His Majesty's Forces.[90] The reconstituted I.N.A.&V.D.F. seems to have avoided these restrictions.

By September 1916, about £800 per week was being distributed, with a large amount of money still coming from Clan na Gael and other sympathisers in the U.S.A. A printed report of accounts for the six months ending 17 February 1917[91] extols the magnificent public response to the international appeals: £30,000 came from the U.S.A., and £20,000 from Australia and New Zealand. But this was not enough, the report added: 'The continued internment of many hundred Irishmen up to Christmas,

87 Cal McCarthy, Cumann na mBan and the Irish revolution (Cork, 2007), p. 76.
88 N.L.I., I.N.A.&V.D.F. papers, MS 50, 935/39/1.
89 Ann Matthews, Renegades, Irish republican women 1900-1922 (Cork, 2010), p. 162.
90 Family sources.
91 N.L.I., I.N.A.&V.D.F. papers, MS 50, 935/39/12 (3).

and the dismissal from their employment of large numbers of those arrested...made the necessity for providing for the temporary cases much greater than was originally expected'. This report was signed by thirteen Honorary Treasurers, of whom Kathleen Clarke signed first. If we translate these figures into modern values, the amounts really are staggering; £100 in 1922 is equivalent to £6,300 in 2023.

The I.N.A.&V.D.F. thus became the first strong nationalist movement to develop after the trauma of the Easter Rising; branches and committees were established throughout the country, and thousands of pounds were collected each week. A nationalist mood was growing and spreading, and even those who would not have been sympathetic to the Rising were impressed by the ideals of the leaders, and revolted by their executions at the hands of the British administration. Cumann na mBan Inc. was set up in the US, and another supportive group in Australia, as well as an Irish Relief Committee in London. According to the *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*, numerous other funds were also established — The Lord Mayor of Dublin's Fund, a Trinity College O.T.C. Commemoration Fund, and an *Irish Times* Fund, but these worked largely for casualties on the other side of the conflict.[92]

The *Catholic Bulletin* ran a series of monthly articles on the Rising and promised in the December 1916 edition: 'All monies entrusted to us will be acknowledged in these columns and handed over to the Education Sub-Committee of the National Aid and Volunteer Dependents' Fund to be used only for educational purposes at the direction of that Committee'. The magazine published photographs of a number of the women and children bereaved by the Rising, stating, 'In their natural desire for retirement and their strong aversion to the notoriety of the press, it was with very much difficulty we obtained their consent to have the photographs published or even taken'. Nevertheless, they managed to publish twenty-two photographs of mourning families, including one of Kathleen Clarke and her three sons. Someone had a clear and unsentimental eye for publicity; undoubtedly these tragic images, often with five or more children (Mrs Philip Clarke was portrayed with eight) inspired readers to contribute generously, the more so since it could be seen that some of the women were nursing newborn babies. But, as McAuliffe has written, these images 'showed a nonthreatening, acceptable republicanism, gendered in a respectable discourse of sacrificial male patriots and passive, keening, grieving women...The sacrifice of the widows...was swiftly constructed as one of stoicism, loyalty, and emotional suffering'.[93] For many years, Clarke maintained this image, while simultaneously forging her own path through the fractured politics of the time. She was always more than just Tom Clarke's widow, but that judgement of her role has endured.

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92 Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook (Dublin, 1916), p. 221.
93 M. McAuliffe, 'Remembered for being forgotten' in O. Frawley (ed.), *Women and the decade of commemorations* (Indiana, 2021), p. 16.

Sorcha MacMahon, a young and energetic Cumann na mBan member, was invaluable to Clarke at this time; Clarke speaks of their relationship as 'a friendship founded on love, trust and admiration'.[94] Cumann na mBan immediately began to help in sourcing need and distributing aid. Many of its members had been deprived of the opportunity to take part in the Rising, because Volunteer officers were reluctant to use them when the time came, and they seized the chance to make their mark now. There were far more families needing help than had been expected by the revolutionary leaders, and there was no form of social welfare available to widows at the time. They were usually supported by relatives, but many respectable families were appalled by the Rising, and the loss of life, and were not very sympathetic to its victims. Despite Clarke's protestations about English money, it is probable that families in such dire need would have accepted anything, from any source. Many of the wives had not even known that their husbands were going out to fight, let alone why, and were now left destitute, and even those who had been in comfortable circumstances found themselves bereft.

The distribution of aid was a great comfort to the men who were interned after the Rising, and were concerned for their abandoned and struggling families. A letter from the imprisoned James Ryan, dated 23 June 1916, says: 'The men are constantly getting letters now to say that the nice young ladies had been around to see their people. We sent a fresh list of names over the other day, so I'm sure there'll soon be no-one in want'.[95] However, it became known that the families were sending some of the money given to them over to their men in Frongoch. A letter to Art Ó Brien in London (14 October 1916) states: '...in nearly every case of a family to which a grant is made, communications are coming in to say that they are obliged out of the grant to spare at least 4/[shillings]- or 5/[shillings]- to supplement the food at Frongoch...this means that they will be unable to keep going themselves unless we increase the grant, as we have already had to do in scores of cases'.[96] Dr Kathleen Lynn was heavily involved in the Fund's activities; Clarke and Lynn became close at this time, and remained good friends for many years.

One of the services provided by the I.N.A.&V.D.F. was that of education costs for children of the deceased leaders, and others. Minutes of an executive meeting of 10 December 1916 list the names of those children 'who are still at school at St Enda's: Sean Mallin, Seamus Mallin, Daly Clarke [Clarke's eldest son], Ronan Kent (day pupil), Thomas Keenan'.[97] At a later date, some of the boys (including Daly Clarke) moved to Father Sweetman's school in Wexford.

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94 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 69.
95 U.C.D.A., Ryan papers P88/387.
96 N.L.I., Art O'Brien papers, 8435/31.
97 N.L.I., Domhnall Ua Conchubhair papers, 50, 935/39/6.

Collins as Secretary

Michael Staines was the original National Organiser of the fund, but a new office manager was required, someone of organising ability and energy, but who would also be able to take over the (unspoken) aim of the fund: to re-energize the existing but depleted I.R.B., and to drive forward a republican agenda. One of the applicants for this post was Michael Collins, a young Volunteer who had been interned in Frongoch camp in Wales. Here he had distinguished himself as a born leader, charismatic and invigorating. Having worked in the British Post Office, he was skilled in clerical work and communications; before the Rising, he had assisted Joseph Plunkett at the Kimmage H.Q. in a clerical capacity. He won over the initially doubtful committee members, making a particular effort to impress Clarke, and was given the post.[98]

It was not necessarily easy for Collins to pick up the reins. He had not had a leading role in the Rising, but the Volunteers were glad to see him now in charge. However, the I.R.B. had always been a close-knit and suspicious organisation, and the fact that Collins had been part of an unofficial I.R.B. circle in Frongoch was not necessarily a recommendation to them. Objections were made to Collins at a meeting of the Centres Board of the I.R.B., but the Chairman's casting vote went to him. Employed at £2 10 shillings a week, he was also brought on to the I.R.B. Council, which gave him added status, and was co-opted to the reconstituted Volunteer executive. He was one of the authors of a manifesto on 22 May 1917 which pledged 'to complete by force of arms the work begun by the men of Easter Week'. Clarke was presumably happy with this, but the manifesto implicitly criticised the organisation of the Easter Rising, which would not have pleased her.

Collins shouldered an immense workload, organising fundraising activities, liaising with local activists and committees, looking after ex-prisoners seeking money or work, dealing with the many sub-committees, sending comforts to remaining prisoners and welcoming them on their release. He controlled funds tightly but fairly, carefully considering each case for assistance. Some of those he worked with saw him as bullying, and undoubtedly he had little patience with incompetence or laziness. Despite his later reputation for travelling the country, it was in fact Staines who did the undercover travelling, pulling together the strands of a new republican movement. Collins was almost completely desk-bound, and when he travelled it was in his own time.[99]

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98 For more on Clarke's relationship with Collins, see Chapter 4.
99 P. Hart, *Mick, the real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), pp. 113, 138, 139.

Máire Comerford complains that the I.N.A.&V.D.F. became, to some extent, a lost opportunity to foreground the agency of women in political life, even if it was originally predicated on the status of widowhood. She writes, 'Two outstanding women, Mrs Tom (Kathleen) Clarke and Mrs Áine Ceannt, were the two 1916 widows who had the best understanding of the plans of the insurgents, and of the duties that would have to be undertaken afterwards...In this period, Irish women had the only chance they ever had to be important in the leadership of the nation'. Comerford attributes this lost opportunity to the appointment of Collins, which led to a sidelining of the original committee members.[100] Clarke and Mrs Ceannt had been founder members of Cumann na mBan, and worked well together in the Central Branch, but now the military men came to the fore; the balance of power had definitely shifted. Clarke's militancy in relation to Britain, however, had not faded; Lane writes that Jacob recorded Mrs Pearse and Mrs Clarke in November 1916 'agreeing that they would gladly put up with German tyranny here for the sake of seeing it in England' – a very blinkered view of what tyranny could mean![101]

It is probable that Clarke never regretted her decision to enable Michael Collins to run the I.N.A.&V.D.F., as he did exactly what she hoped he would do. She was happy that a more militant policy was being followed, and he displayed all the energy and enthusiasm she could have wished for. However, deeper acquaintance with him did reveal some failings, and in February 1926 she would write to Devoy in New York, '...Collins, though brilliant in his sphere was a capable energitic [sic] man, but, if he had all the qualities in the world his two weaknesses would have off set them, drink & vanity'.[102]

It has been said of Collins that he 'apparently thought little of women as political leaders, and there is almost no extant correspondence with any in Sinn Féin and Cumann na mBan'.[103] He could be thoughtful about protecting Clarke, once having a list of names from her recopied because, he said, 'The way you write a K...would lead anyone finding this straight back to you'.[104] However, he certainly used her for his own purposes, and discarded her when it suited him. While Clarke was in Holloway prison in 1918, (see pages 67, 176-8), a victim of the so-called 'German Plot', and a general election was called for December, her local branch was persuaded to nominate Richard Mulcahy by assurances that Clarke would be proposed in Limerick. However, the Sinn Féin organisers (who wanted to bolster the militant wing) knew that Micheál Colivet, a leader of the Limerick Volunteers, was already the candidate there, so she was squeezed out completely. This manipulation was at the

100 Comerford, *On dangerous ground*, pp. 63-4.
101 Leeann Lane, *Rosamond Jacob: Third person singular* (Dublin, 2010), p.75.
102 A. Dolan & W. Murphy, *Michael Collins, the man and the revolution* (Cork, 2018), p. 340.
103 Hart, Mick, the real Michael Collins, p. 343.
104 M. Forester, *Michael Collins – the lost leader* (London, 1971), p. 84.

least very dismissive treatment of someone who had been influential in Collins's political ascendancy, but Clarke does not seem to have borne a grudge – perhaps she did not blame him personally.

By the end of 1917, almost all the Easter Rising prisoners had been released from internment, and in November the I.N.A.&V.D.F. committee advertised that the fund would shortly close down. In September of that year an Irish Republican Prisoners' Dependents' Fund (I.R.P.D.F) had been established at the Sinn Féin H.Q. in Harcourt Street, an openly political rather than a charitable body. Collins, Staines and Clarke were on its committee, and local committees of the I.N.A.&V.D.F. were encouraged to alter their focus to the I.R.P.D.F. The I.N.A.&V.D.F. had overall raised a total of £134,520.[105] Collins, now Adjutant General of the Volunteer general staff, was gradually moving away from the I.N.A.&V.D.F., and at an extraordinary meeting on 1 July 1918 he was dismissed, with a month's salary in lieu of notice.

Clarke herself stayed closely involved with the I.N.A.&V.D.F. through its lifetime, and many of the fundraising contributions were sent to her personally, indicating her high profile among republican sympathisers.

Sinn Féin

After the Easter Rising, republican politics began to use the banner of Sinn Féin, in order to wage a united campaign, and the party was reorganised in 1917 under Éamon de Valera as President. The original Sinn Féin party, established by Arthur Griffith, had been strictly non-violent, but the Rising was continually referred to in the media and by British authorities as a 'Sinn Féin' affair, and this misleading shorthand became widely accepted.

Clarke's time in Sinn Féin saw the development of her relationship with Éamon de Valera, a man she worked with for years but never grew to trust. She saw him as a devious politician, and she professed a deep distrust of such people, although she could be quite political herself. A strong part of her reservation about de Valera was his loyalty to Eoin MacNeill. Tom had impressed on her on the night of his execution that MacNeill's countermand had damaged the Rebellion's chances irrevocably, and that he should never be allowed back into Irish politics again. Clarke held firmly all her life to that belief, and made several efforts to convince de Valera of the truth of Tom's assertion.

On de Valera's side, it would seem that he found great difficulty in treating women as equals; although they had had an important role in revolutionary activities, he did not see them as deserving of valued

105 Matthews, *Renegades*, p.176.

places in the new Ireland which would emerge. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, during the 1937 Constitution debates, accused him of a distrust of women. When, in April 1932, he gave a eulogy at Mrs Pearse's funeral, he extolled the fact that without the fame of her sons, 'her modesty would have kept her out of the public eye'. It is clear what he thought of women who were in the public eye.

Soon after the 1916 executions Clarke, wanting to keep up the pressure on Britain, called a public meeting to demand that the bodies of the executed men should be exhumed and returned to their families, and de Valera was invited to address the meeting. Clarke was bitterly disappointed when he turned his speech into a passionate commitment to back this demand through force of arms. She knew immediately that they had lost that battle through his belligerence. She told him, 'My hope of succeeding in this demand was not through the force of arms, but through the force of public opinion, which we women had been able to arouse when you men were in prison'. She consoled herself with the observation that his statement 'had set a headline for the continuation of the fight, even if he had not meant it to be interpreted in that way'.[106]

Still intent on convincing de Valera to repudiate MacNeill, Clarke invited both men to her Dundrum home on 28 July 1917, and repeated Tom's strictures. She stated that she fully believed MacNeill had agreed to sign the Proclamation, and had had no right to countermand the plans. When MacNeill took issue with her, she was outraged, as he seemed to be accusing Tom of lying. MacNeill, recalling this meeting in his memoir, says that she spoke 'very plainly and without any discourtesy. She was of the impression that I had broken faith...' He had learnt too late that there had been a secret I.R.B. council that had kept things from him, but he recognised that both Clarkes apparently believed that he had known everything, had accepted all the arrangements and had signed the Proclamation, or had agreed to sign it.[107]

When the Easter Rising internees were released in late 1917, de Valera was elected President of Sinn Féin at the October Árd Fheis, and MacNeill was proposed for the Executive. Markievicz stood up and denounced MacNeill, as one who had undermined the Easter Rising. She was given a very hostile reception. Angered by this treatment of a woman who had fought as energetically as anyone else there, Clarke supported her, as did Helen Molony, and a fierce argument ensued. Clarke declared: '...I wish to mention that my husband declared to me the night before his death that John MacNeill had signed the Declaration of Independence but repudiated it afterwards; and he said that Mr MacNeill acted a dishonorable part and had cut the ground from under their feet. The question is whether you are going to decide the men of Easter Week were right or MacNeill was right' (Cries of 'No, no' and

106 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 189-90.
107 F.X. Martin, 'Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising', *Irish Historical Studies*, XII, No. 47, 1961, pp. 226-71.

interruptions). De Valera insisted, 'I know from the statement of one of the men who died that MacNeill did not sign the Proclamation.'[108]

Clarke was disgusted by that 1917 Executive meeting: 'Here was a woman who had come out and risked her life...and Irishmen were ready to do violence to her for attacking a man whose action had caused the failure of the Rising, and who had not participated in it'.[109] She believed there were wheels within wheels, and that the leadership was intent on rehabilitating MacNeill. In the event he was elected to the 24-person Executive. Macardle's account says that MacNeill 'was opposed by one or two of those present as having “cut the ground from under the feet” of the insurgents of Easter Week. De Valera, however, spoke warmly in his defence'.[110] This is a very anodyne description of what was clearly an impassioned event, but Macardle was no doubt keen to stress the unity of Sinn Féin, and underplay any controversy.

Clarke gave her opinion of de Valera after this Convention in a letter to her sister Madge: 'I fear he is too easily influenced and he lacks experience, perhaps it is that he is young. He is a lovable character, light-hearted and boyish and he is getting enough adulation to turn an older and more experienced man's head...I find it hard to trust new people, those I had learned to trust are nearly all gone'. Clarke was of course appalled by the election of MacNeill, and wrote to Madge on 6 January 1917, 'Great God, think of it, here was Count Plunkett, who lost his eldest son, whose two younger sons got penal servitude, himself and wife deported, his house looted by soldiers, his position worth £600 or £800 per year gone, and he gets about half MacNeil's [sic] vote...Is it any wonder I felt out of sympathy with such a gathering, or that I felt an isolated, neglected, lonely woman, and for comfort the men tell me it's all the fault of Countess Markievicz and myself for attacking him. It is the fault of Arthur Griffith who kept the bogey of a split and the dire consequences of it before the minds of the people day in day out for months before the Convention. They cannot say however that it is our fault that Ireland backed a coward'. She was angry and depressed, and no-one seemed to be listening to her.[111]

Clarke, Markievicz and Molony were all members of Cumann na dTeachtairí (League of Women Delegates, later known as Coiste na dTeachtairí), a group of Cumann na mBan women working to secure greater participation of women in politics. Their objectives were: 'To safeguard the political rights of Irish women; To ensure adequate representation for them in the Republican movement; To urge and facilitate the appointment of women to Public Boards throughout the country; To foster

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108 Mary O'Sullivan, B.M.H. WS 0465, p. 6: 'She [Clarke] did not speak at length but she shed tears and aroused the sympathy of the meeting'. This is a rare picture of Clarke expressing emotion in public.
109 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 194.
110 D. Macardle, *The Irish republic* (Dublin, 1951), p. 235.
111 Both letters from family sources.

feminist thought'.[112] When the new Sinn Féin Executive Committee was formed in 1917, through an amalgamation of Sinn Féin and Liberty Clubs, men from the Irish Volunteers were automatically co-opted, but members of Cumann na mBan were not. '[S]ome of the most politically astute women in the nationalist movement suspected that they were being sold out, their claims to equality ignored in the political machinations underway, and that an agenda was being created in which they would have no voice or influence.'[113] They wrote a letter demanding that six women be co-opted immediately, naming Clarke, Dr Lynn, Áine Ceannt, Jenny Wyse Power, Helena Molony and Alice Ginnell.

Their claim, they stated, was 'based on the risks women took, equally with the men, to have the Irish Republic established, the necessity of having their organised co-operation in the further struggle to free Ireland and the advantage of having their ideas on many social problems likely to arise in the near future'. Their request was refused, so they decided that some of them would join Sinn Féin, to have a voice at the upcoming Convention. At that Convention four women were elected to the Executive: Clarke, Markievicz, Lynn and Grace Plunkett (widow of Joseph Plunkett), but the group were disappointed to learn that out of more than one thousand delegates, only twelve were women; Sinn Féin members were conservative in their choices. The Executive, with its four women members, lasted till December 1917, establishing a number of constituency executives, and was then replaced by a new *ard-comhairle*. As President, de Valera had tended to ignore the Executive.[114]

The group, which included members of the Irish Women Workers' Union, provided classes in public speaking (under Sheehy Skeffington) and other aids to aspiring women politicians, and continually lobbied the leadership to have women nominated when elections were due. They produced leaflets, wrote articles about the woman's point of view, and discussed linking with other women's groups, but were cautious on the matter of women's suffrage groups; they remained committed to the republican cause first. They held meetings, but not always in public; the minutes book records a meeting in December 1917 in the bathroom at the Mansion House, and other meetings took place in the homes of various members. '[T]he significance of those prominent women meeting in such circumstances does not suggest a strong political movement, but a secretive, behind the scenes action group, planning how to approach negotiations without bringing attention to their actions...the group ceased to meet after 1919'.[115]

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112 U.C.D.A., Humphries papers P106/1127 (1).
113 Margaret Ward, 'The League of Women Delegates and Sinn Féin', *History Ireland* Vol. 4 No. 3, Autumn 1996, pp. 37-41.
114 M. Laffan, The resurrection of Ireland, the Sinn Féin party 1916-1923 (Cambridge, 1999), p. 175.
115 S. McCoole in L. Weeks & M. Ó Fathartaigh (eds.), *The Treaty: debating and establishing the Irish state* (Dublin, 2018), p. 143.

To some extent, members of the group supported more traditional roles for women, making sure, for example, that women were represented on the Food Committee, but they were determined to be heard at the highest levels of Sinn Féin. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington later commented that it had not disbanded because it had achieved its aims, but because of difficult conditions during the War of Independence, and that after the Truce the situation for women within the party structure had not changed. [116] However, the training provided by Cumann na dTeachtaire enabled many women to win positions as councillors and poor law guardians in the coming years.[117]

One of the few political avenues open to women at this time was through local government; parliamentary seats were fiercely contested, and a woman would not be seen as a winning option, but they could be risked at the lower level. Women were already familiar in such contexts as poor law guardians and health committees, and were occasionally granted the right to stand for local office. Women were beginning to join Sinn Féin clubs, though they were not always welcome: '...in some cases local prejudice still militates against their admission in spite of the fact that the Sinn Féin Constitution expressly lays down their eligibility'.[118]

Clarke in Holloway

A defining moment in Clarke's political development was her 1918 imprisonment. In early 1918 Dublin Castle, annoyed at being unable to enforce conscription in Ireland, arrested a number of Sinn Féin leaders, alleging an imaginary 'German Plot'. Collins warned Clarke that she was on the list to be taken, but she refused to believe him, so took no evasive action. She was arrested on 17 May and deported to Holloway Prison in London, where she shared a wing with two other 'wild Irish women', Constance Markievicz and Maud Gonne MacBride.

Clarke devotes Chapter 8 in *Revolutionary Woman* to this frightening and uncomfortable experience. Being interned rather than tried, the women had no idea how long they would be imprisoned. Clarke fretted about her children, Gonne MacBride sank into depression, and Markievicz irritated them both by acting the 'old lag', as she had already experienced prison life. Clarke makes quite an entertaining story of the efforts of these three disparate personalities to shake down together, eventually coming to a level of acceptance, but it was obviously a harrowing time for all of them. Gonne MacBride was released after about six months, having influential friends, but Clarke remained there till February

116 McCoole, op.cit.
117 Ward, 'League of Women Delegates', op. cit.
118 Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Director of Organisation, Sinn Féin Árd Fheis report, U.C.D.A., P88/338, 27 October 2021.

1919 before being released on health grounds. She had been having heart problems, but kept refusing to ask for release.[119] In March all the internees were finally released as a result of the influenza epidemic which was sweeping the prisons, and Markievicz was triumphantly welcomed back to Dublin by cheering crowds. She had been elected the first woman M.P. in the House of Commons in the general election of December 1918, although she would not take the seat.

In that election, Sinn Féin won seventy-three seats, decimating the Irish Parliamentary Party. It set up an alternative parliament, Dáil Éireann, and created 'shadow' government departments, as well as a system of Dáil courts. Countess Markievicz fought hard for a ministry, and became Minister for Labour after much argument. The first meeting of the Dáil was held in January 1919, and is seen as a starting point for the subsequent War of Independence.

Clarke was elected a County Court judge in the Dáil courts, and also chaired the North Dublin City judges. These met once a month to discuss their work, seeking to improve their structures, but there was no particular place where they could hold the courts consistently, and they were continually being raided. The North City courts functioned without a break from the start. She insists that much was due to the energy and activities of many other women, who were ready day and night to serve when courts needed to be held, including Jennie Wyse Power, Mrs O'Shea Leamy, Mrs Buckley and Mrs McKean.[120] Sinn Féin's Constitution required that a woman judge should be present at all hearings involving women. Laurence Nugent states that Clarke 'carried on the court for a considerable time and her decisions were never disputed. She certainly gave everyone a fair trial and the number of cases heard was considerable.'[121]

On 22 January 1919, the Sinn Féin Constituent Assembly, Dáil Éireann, began its second session. A number of ministers were appointed, but their names were not disclosed; the proceedings were held in private. At this stage, Clarke was not a member of the Standing Committee; she was on the Sinn Féin Executive, however, and attended a number of the meetings, although she was often marked as absent.

In early 1919, Clarke bumped into de Valera outside the G.P.O. He was thinking of visiting the U.S.A. and promised to talk to her beforehand, as she had many useful contacts, both from her time living there and from her continued correspondence with John Devoy. After the Rising, Kathleen had remained in touch with Devoy, who clearly trusted her information and updates. Soon after this

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119 Linda Kearns, B.M.H. WS 0404: 'My sister and I kept a nurses' home in Gardiner Place. We did not normally take patients, but Mrs Clarke stayed with us for six weeks when she had the breakdown after she came back from jail.'
120 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 237.
121 Nugent, B.M.H. WS 0907, p. 93.

meeting, Clarke heard that de Valera had gone to the United States without contacting her again. She was not surprised to hear later on that a split between de Valera and Devoy was imminent, and that his visit had caused trouble in Irish-American ranks.[122] Clarke would have been on the Devoy side of any argument, but it is unlikely that any advice of hers would have been useful; American politics had changed greatly since she had lived there. The Republican and Democratic parties were interested only in American politics, and were not inclined to antagonize Britain by coming out in support of Irish independence.

Although Clarke had been pushed out of the way in the 1918 general election, she was nominated for two wards in the municipal elections of 1920, and was elected Alderman for both wards, Mountjoy and Wood Quay. The only other female Alderman elected that year was a unionist candidate in Belfast. In her memoir, Clarke recalls the first meeting of the new, now heavily republican, Dublin Corporation. When the town clerk called the roll, and Jennie Wyse Power answered her name in Irish, he insisted that she had not been legally elected because her name was registered in Irish, and English was the official language of the country. Mrs Wyse Power protested vigorously, and won her claim.

Clarke worked hard in local government. She writes: 'On 3 May 1920, Dublin Corporation acknowledged the authority of...Dáil Éireann, as the duly elected Government of Ireland, and undertook to give effect to all decrees promulgated by the same Dáil Éireann. It was not a unanimous vote, but the Republicans had the majority vote in the Corporation and on the various committees, and so had their own way in most things. Not so with the various Boards on which we represented Dublin Corporation. Meetings were held every day, nearly every hour, all having the one purpose, doing the work of the Corporation and upholding the Republic'.[123] By this stage, her sons were spending most of their time in Limerick, where the younger two went to school, and were under the care of their aunts.

Clarke chaired committees such as the School Meals Committee, and was Corporation representative on several boards, such as that of the Harcourt Street Children's Hospital. As this was a heavily unionist group, she was surprised to be welcomed by it, having expected the members to be hostile to her. She was one of the women involved in the Women Prisoners' Defence Association, which presented a petition in 1923 to the U.S. Congress on the conditions of republican prisoners. 'They calculated that there were over 11,000 republican prisoners in jail...and they sought “prisoner of war

122 It was a successful fund-raising exercise, raising up to $3 million, but some of the activists found de Valera arrogant and stubborn. However, they were already riven with dissension, and Devoy had been removed as secretary of Clan na Gael. Devoy and his adherents insisted that de Valera could not be President of a new Irish Republic, as he had not been a member of the I.R.B.
123 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, pp. 227-8.

treatment" for them'.[124] This association is not mentioned in the memoir. She continued as a Vice-President of Cumann na mBan, but between 1920 and 1921 she attended only nine Executive meetings out of forty-seven (though indeed Markievicz, the President, attended only four).[125] She was also connected with numerous hospital boards and charities; she joined the committee established by Dr Kathleen Lynn to found a children's hospital in Charlemont Street. St Ultan's, originally planned for use during the flu epidemic, was formally opened in 1919, with £70 in the bank, and two infants in care.[126]

The Lord Mayor of Dublin during the War of Independence, Alderman Laurence O'Neill was not a Sinn Féin member, but was sympathetic to its aims. Clarke says that whenever he left the city, he would appoint her as *locum tenens*, as she was the only Sinn Féin Alderman always available. It was he who established the Irish White Cross in early 1920, to aid the poor and sick, and invited Clarke to act on its Executive Committee. This consisted of men and women of various political persuasions, but they all worked with the same aim, relieving the suffering of the civilian population, on whom the brutality of the British auxiliary forces, the Black and Tans, fell heavily. Clarke was most proud of the setting up of the Orphans' Care Committee, of which she was Honorary Secretary; here she again worked with Mrs Ceannt, who was given the paid position of General Secretary. As a mark of the extent of need, they had over six hundred children on their books at the highest point.

The Irish White Cross existed from 1920 to 1928, when it was wound up. Its Children's Relief Association, established for the benefit of child victims of hostilities, began in 1920 and ran till 1946. It was originally under the control of the White Cross Trustees, but after 1928 the 'Committee for the Maintenance of Orphans' was made an incorporated association, and its name was changed. This enlarged its scope considerably, and it began to help families who had lost breadwinners, whether permanently or temporarily. This aid went to victims of the War of Independence, but ultimately also included victims of the Civil War. No distinction was made as to which side of the divide a family belonged.[127]

The association started with a fund of £150,000 in 1922, and over the years expended a sum of over £200,000. Clarke was a member of the original Standing Executive Committee. Many overseas contributions arrived, including $5 million dollars sent by a U.S. Commission for Relief of Distress in Ireland. Based at 27 Dawson Street, Dublin, the office provided such services for mothers and children as convalescent care after illness, or the provision of working tools or clothes to enable a child to

124 Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh, *Kathleen Lynn: Irishwoman, patriot, doctor* (Dublin, 2006), p. 48.
125 U.C.D.A., Humphries papers P106/1130 (13).
126 Lynn, B.M.H. WS 0357, p. 11.
127 Á. Ceannt, The story of the Irish White Cross 1920-1947 (Dublin, n.d.).

begin work. Many children continued to keep in touch with the office for years after they no longer needed financial aid. However, some of its activities were more political; it channelled money, particularly American money, up to Belfast, to support expelled workers and displaced families, but this ended once the Civil War broke out. Clarke acted as an Honorary Secretary for a number of years, and became a co-Treasurer with Madame O'Rahilly in 1941, after the death of John O'Neill.

As the War of Independence raged on, the Black and Tans were given free rein to brutalise the population. Clarke gives a vivid picture of the fear and violence that prevailed over the next couple of years. Her own home was raided many times, and on one occasion the raiders felt her son Daly's chin, to see if he had started a beard and was old enough to shoot. Madge gives another example of the insecurity they lived with, when the Limerick home was raided while the Clarkes were staying with them. 'My sister left next day; she realised that Limerick was getting hotter even than Dublin'.[128]

In October 1920 the Daly home in Limerick had all its contents removed and burnt on the street.[129] Agnes Daly was brutalised, having her hair cut off and her hand severely injured by a knife. Madge says in her memoir that this was done by a notorious Black and Tan known as 'The Mexican', who left Limerick hastily the following day. No redress was possible. During various raids on Clarke's Dublin home, the Black and Tans destroyed what they could, on one occasion killing a Kerry Blue pup, and another time releasing her hens from their coop. As she says, 'It all seemed so senseless'. Another raid on the Dalys in Limerick resulted in a severe injury to the elderly Mrs Catharine Daly, who was struck on the shoulder by a rifle butt, and given a wound which never properly healed.

A Dublin Corporation meeting was raided one day by the Black and Tans, who called the roll, hoping to identify people they were looking for. Clarke writes, 'I called out, “Let no-one answer”. No-one did, even the Aldermen and councillors opposed to us, which I thought was rather fine of them. Despite that, the Tans' plan was partially successful; not everyone has a poker face, and the slightest flicker in the face of a member whose name was called and he was noted, pounced upon and arrested.'[130] The authorities continued, naturally, to oppose the 'alternative government'; the Public Health Offices were taken over by force, as was City Hall. The Council then had to meet in the Mansion House. Despite the difficulties, city administration continued, and on 26 January 1922 Clarke was appointed to act as Honorary Censor of 'Cinematograph Films exhibited or intended to be exhibited in the County Borough of Dublin', for the year November 1921 to October 1922. Sadly, she does not mention this at all in her memoir; it would be interesting to know what the films were, and how she judged them.

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128 Madge Daly memoir, U.L., Glucksman Library, P2/267/255.
129 Four of the sisters had to move into the home of the oldest, Eileen O'Toole and her family, and their mother went to stay with another daughter, Laura O'Sullivan, and her family.
130 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 228.

Along with the Black and Tans, the British army and R.I.C. could also behave intemperately, and Madge Daly gives a very vivid description of an early morning prayer vigil outside Limerick Barracks in protest at an execution. This was violently dispersed by lorry-loads of police, aided by Black and Tans. 'My mother, who was old and frail, was dashed against the wall and the Rosary beads torn out of her hand. Seeing all my friends warding off the blows from me, I stood up and was again attacked, being dashed with force against a wall, so that my side was hurt. During the attack a machine-gun was trained on us from the lorry, and vile abuse was poured on us. We were called “bloody hypocrites, murderers”, etc'.[131]

Clarke's memoir also recalls the deaths of Peadar Clancy, Conor Clune and Dick McKee, shot as spies in Dublin Castle. She had been in contact with Clancy over the provision of bombs, after a clerical student secretly gave her a formula for safer bomb manufacture – the I.R.A. bombs were very faulty. However, her house was once raided while a copy of this formula was hidden in it; the copy was not found, but she could no longer live with the anxiety and the risk to her sons, so put the student and Clancy in direct touch with one another.[132]

In February 1920, in a newspaper interview, de Valera proposed a 'Cuban solution' to the question of Irish independence. This was the Monroe Doctrine, which had given Cuba independence from the U.S.A., while stipulating that Cuba could never be used for any attack on the U.S. Clarke had been living in the U.S. at the time of this event, and knew that many Americans were ashamed of their country's attitude to Cuba. She tried to discuss this with four young Sinn Féin men, but found that they 'were blazing with indignation at my daring to criticise their chief'. This incident demonstrates the growing sense of de Valera as 'The Chief', whose decisions could not be questioned. Clarke was quite upset at this confrontation. 'I had worked and suffered for my country at least as much as de Valera or any other man alive, and thought I had as much right to have an opinion and to air it as de Valera or any other man on things which affected my country'.[133] Clarke expresses the view that de Valera's 'Cuban solution' demonstrated to the British that he could be led to compromise. Clarke herself would never accept that compromise is occasionally necessary, if forward movement is to be achieved; she had lost too much to give way.

Clarke, a member of various hospital boards, was able to help Collins when one of his notorious 'Squad' (a group of assassins) was sacked from Portrane Mental Hospital by the Minister for Local Government for being drunk and disorderly. Collins insisted he be reinstated, as one of his best men in

131 U.L., Glucksman Library, Daly papers, P176/5/15, 21 June 1921.
132 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 239-40.
133 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 254.

the area, so Clarke moved at a board meeting that the Minister's decision should be sent back for consideration as being too severe, and it was reversed.[134]

Treaty talks

A Truce in the War of Independence was called in July 1921; both sides were exhausted. Britain was losing badly in the propaganda war, particularly in the United States, and the I.R.A. was running out of resources. Arrangements were discussed for a Treaty, and talks were proposed for October. But when the question of choosing plenipotentiaries for the London talks arose, de Valera made the decision to stay in Dublin. Collins and Griffith were to lead the delegation. Clarke complained: 'He [de Valera] wraps the explanations of his reasons in so many words that, like a badly-developed negative, one has a suspicion of what they are, but it is too cloudy to be sure'.[135]. She was suspicious that he would prefer to remain distanced from the negotiations, in case things went wrong, and that he hoped to hide behind scapegoats. Collins had much the same suspicions, but he was determined to brave it out.

In a draft B.M.H. statement, Clarke recounts an altercation with Collins, whom she met with his fiancée just before he left for London. 'A man had been shot by the IRA having been found guilty of espionage. It had been proposed to give financial help to this man's family. I opposed the suggestion as the money had been subscribed for the dependants of men who were fighting for Ireland; using it in the way suggested would amount to misappropriation. Then a member said that he had instructions from the Minister of Finance to help the family from the White Cross funds. I wanted to find from Mick if the report was true. He flew into a rage at me saying that it was true; what would I do with them, leave them to starve? I replied that I would leave them to the ordinary sources of charity to which families are left every day whose breadwinner dies leaving them unprovided for. I continued that children have to suffer for the sins of their parents. He answered that he was going to put an end to that damned cold-blooded thinking. I retorted that he thought himself greater than God Almighty, he was going to change the unalterable laws of nature. I then found that he had drink taken and was not fully responsible. I left him in a very troubled state of mind. I was in the grip of a horror. I am unable to describe how I felt about a man going to London to discuss with men skilled and trained in the art

134 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman,* p. 269; A. Dolan in T.E. Hachey, *Turning points in twentieth century Irish* history (Dublin, 2011), pp. 36-7; N.A.I., D.E. 2/517, Portrane. The version given to Collins by Michael Lynch was that Joe Dolan and four others, drunk, had been locked in a padded cell and had slashed madly at the walls, causing severe damage. 'They were stark mad for at least half an hour...would strongly urge...that they be given a rest from all arduous duty'.
135 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 255.

of diplomacy. Such a man, who saw no disgrace in being drunk, the men he would have to deal with would not be long in finding his weakness and use it to their advantage.'[136]

It is clear from this account (if accurate) that Clarke had no trouble standing up to Collins if necessary; not many people did so. It is also clear that a man like Collins, who could express himself emotionally, would never understand Clarke's point of view about 'the sins of the fathers', which does indeed sound very cold-blooded. But she was dealing with other people's money, something which was almost sacrosanct for her. This dated back to when she and Tom disbursed Clan na Gael funds, never allowing them to be misused for other purposes. There is also the echo of a horror she always felt for drunkenness. She and Tom were teetotallers; his father and brother had been alcoholics, and she had observed her Uncle John the worse for drink more than once. She could not take it casually that Collins was drunk; it shattered any faith she had in him. Of course Collins himself was under considerable strain at the time; he was not confident that the negotiations would go well, and knew who would be blamed.

Clarke was extremely critical of the fact that no women were included in the delegation as plenipotentiaries. Griffith and de Valera had promised to consider the matter, but in the end did nothing. 'This seemed strange to me', she says, 'knowing that only for the work done by the women after the Rising, they and their comrades might still be in prison'.[137] She would not have expected to go herself, and Markievicz had blotted her copybook over MacNeill; Mary MacSwiney was a possibility, but was probably considered too undiplomatic in manner. In a 1991 interview, Margaret McCurtain emphasizes the anti-woman environment: '...by 1917 there is no doubt that there was a growing distancing of the political men from the women of the nation. Markievicz, as well as being made Minister for Labour, was also in the Cabinet in the first Dáil. By the second Dáil she had been taken off the Cabinet, as her Ministry was demoted. Mary MacSwiney was proposed to go to London for the Treaty negotiations but she was also dropped'.[138]

McCoole says of MacSwiney, 'In later years, she told a friend that when she asked de Valera if she might join the negotiating team he told her that she was “too extreme”'.[139] A letter from de Valera to Joseph McGarrity says, 'Miss MacSwiney I would have liked to see facing Lloyd George across the table, not merely because of her own personality and her political ability, but Lloyd George could not

136 The draft was in Clarke's original archive, but was not given to the B.M.H. I transcribed it from the archive in Dr Emmet Clarke’s home in Liverpool in 1990. Present whereabouts unknown.
137 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 255.
138 *Irish Press*, 29-30 March 1991.
139 S. McCoole, 'Debating not negotiating, the female TDs of the second Dáil' in Weeks & Ó Fathartaigh, *The Treaty*, p. 145.

fail to see beside her the spirit of her dead brother' (Terence, who had died on hunger strike on 25 October 1920).[140] Inevitably MacSwiney is being overshadowed by her dead male relative, obviously the important person here. The fact remains that women should have been represented at the talks, not just saying rosaries while kneeling outside the door. Griffith was apparently always a supporter of women's franchise, but does not seem to have translated this into action.

On 6 December 1921, while the plenipotentiaries were still negotiating in London, both Clarke and de Valera were conferred with the Freedom of Limerick. She went to Limerick the day before, on the pretext of family business, and did not travel with 'The Chief', who 'travelled to Limerick in great state, with a large retinue in several first-class carriages'; indeed, she was not invited to go with him, which seems very disrespectful treatment of someone who was to be his equal on this occasion. Each of them had to make a speech, and she had a speech ready in her mind – she says she could never speak from notes. Before she spoke, de Valera said to her, 'Be very careful what you say. The times are very critical'. This made her nervous, so she simply thanked everyone for the reception. 'Had de Valera spoken to me earlier, I would have thought out a speech on different lines. Since I was not very familiar with public speaking at the time, it was easy to confuse me'.[141] As they were all returning to Dublin by train the following day, Clarke found herself pressured by Cathal Brugha to join de Valera's party. Possibly the penny had dropped that it would look bad if his co-Freeman went back in a third-class coach by herself. She joined them reluctantly. When they reached Dublin, the evening papers had the first news of the signing of the Treaty. As large cars swept up to meet the Sinn Féin leaders, Clarke slipped away and got her plebeian bus home.

The Freedom of the City address to Mrs Alderman Tom Clarke, T.D., from the Trades and Labour Council of Limerick, was on a parchment scroll, and extolled her bravery and suffering over the years. though it did, of course, identify her primarily through her male relatives. 'You have had your share of sorrow in the loss of those who were dearest to you; your beloved Uncle, who was more than Father, spent his life for Ireland; your only Brother faced his executioners with a smile upon his lips; your devoted Husband crowned his life of service with the God-like nobility of a Patriot's death....with this message they [your fellow-citizens] wish you success in your work for our country, secure in the knowledge that you will ever comport yourself as a woman of Limerick, and a true Daughter of Erin'. Each Freeman was presented with a wooden chest, as Tom had been back in 1899, and Tom and Kathleen remain the only married couple to have been both conferred with the Freedom of Limerick.

140 N.L.I., McGarrity papers MS 17, 440.
141 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 257.

Treaty debates

When Clarke expressed to de Valera her disagreement with the articles of the Treaty that was eventually signed by the plenipotentiaries, he presented her with his own proposals, known as Document No. 2. However, she could see no fundamental difference between the two proposals; the fact that the King was still to be the Head of State, with an oath of loyalty to be sworn, meant to her Dominion status, and she would never accept it. In a later interview with *The Dungannon Observer*, Clarke declared, 'There was not a thraneen of difference between the proposals of de Valera and Collins. De Valera could see a difference, but Mary MacSwiney and I couldn't'. [142] Collins tried hard to convince her that the Treaty would give Ireland the freedom to work towards even greater freedom, but she could not agree.

During the Dáil debate on the Treaty, Clarke spoke vigorously but in a controlled manner.

'I rise to support the motion of the President, to reject this Treaty. It is to me the simple question of right or wrong. To my mind it is a surrender of all our national ideals. I came to the first meeting of this session with the feeling strong upon me, and I have listened to all the arguments in favour of the Treaty. But the only thing I can say of them is: maybe there is something in them, I can't see it. Arthur Griffith said he had peace with England and freedom in Ireland. I can only say it is not the kind of freedom I have looked forward to. If this Treaty is ratified, the result will be a divided people. The same old division will go on, those who will enter the British Empire, those who will not, and so England's game of divide and conquer goes on – God, the tragedy of it!

'I was deeply moved by the Minister of Economics on Monday. Listening to him, I realised more clearly than ever before the very grave decision put to our plenipotentiaries. My sympathy went out to them. I only wish other members of the delegation had taken the same course. Having signed the Document, bring it home and let the Dáil reject or ratify it on its merits. We were told by one deputy on Monday, with a tremendous bellow, that this Treaty was a stupendous achievement. Well, if he means as a measure of Home Rule, I will agree. It is the biggest Home Rule Bill we have been offered, and it gives us a novelty in the way of a new kind of official representing His Majesty King George V, name to be yet decided. If England is powerful enough to impose on us Home Rule, Dominion, or any other kind, let her do so, but in God's name do not accept or approve it, no more than you would any other Coercion Act.

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142 *The Dungannon Observer*, 17 February 1968. Clarke was in Dungannon as a guest of the Thomas Clarke G.A.A. Club, for their Golden Jubilee.

'I heard big, strong military men say here that they would vote for this Treaty, which necessarily means taking an Oath of Allegiance, and I tell these men there is not power enough to force me, nor eloquence enough to influence me in the whole British Empire into taking that Oath, though I am only a frail scrap of humanity. I took an Oath to the Irish Republic, solemnly, reverently, meaning every word of it. I shall never go back from that.

'...I too can go back to 1916. Between one and two o'clock on the morning of the 3rd of May, I, a prisoner in Dublin Castle, was roused from my rest on the floor and taken under armed guard to Kilmainham Jail to see my husband for the last time. I saw him, not alone, but surrounded by British soldiers. He informed me he was to be shot at dawn. Was he in despair like the man who spoke of him on Tuesday? Not he. His head was up, his eyes flashing, his years seemed to have slipped from him. Victory was in every line of him. “Tell the Irish people,” he said, “that I and my comrades believe we have saved the soul of Ireland. We believe she will never lie down again until she has gained absolute freedom.” And though sorrow was in my heart, I gloried in him. I gloried in the men who have carried on the fight since, every one of them. I believe that even if they take a wrong turn now, they will be brave enough to turn back when they discover it. I have sorrow in my heart now, but I don't despair. I never shall. I still believe in them.'

For all her calm statements, the real depth of Clarke’s anguish can be seen in a letter to her sister Madge: 'Great God did I ever think I'd live to see it, to see men who were the bravest, now fooled and blinded by a juggle of words into the belief that this treaty means a realization of our highest ideals. If you heard the speeches in private you'd be sick. Collins has mesmerised them all into thinking it's the high road to everything we dreamed, and he has been fooled into believing it himself, and Dev. to a large extent is to blame, for one thing his lack of experience which I always feared, and another, his habit of trying to work things out alone in his own way taking no one entirely into his confidence, and also trusting too much in the goodness of other people...On Dev's advice we are all restraining ourselves, but it's difficult. I'd just love to rip the duds off some of them...'[143]

As Knirck describes the debates, 'Kathleen Clarke relayed the story of her husband's last night before his execution and Constance Markievicz shared her final conversation with James Connolly. Both of these messages played into the republican hostility to compromise, as Connolly praised those ready to die for Ireland, and Clarke specifically said that the example of the Rising would end any talk of compromise with England'.[144] However, McCoole takes issue with his assertion that the women TDs

143 Clarke to Daly, 19 December 1921, U.L., Glucksman Library, P2/1/10/11.
144 J. Knirck, Imagining Ireland's independence, the debates over the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 (London, 2006), p. 143.

were 'the guardians of the revolutionary traditions and surrogates of men', replacing their male relatives. This, she says, 'dismisses the idea that the women were independent thinkers'.[145]

The anti-woman attitude was exemplified by Fionán Lynch in his pro-Treaty Dáil speech: 'Now I am alive, and I took my chance of being killed as well as any white man in this assembly, and I challenge any man to deny that...' Here Lynch refers specifically to men, implying that women were not able to risk their lives for the nation. 'He later denied to women the right to interpret the dead: “If I were dead, and if I were to be interpreted, I should ask to be interpreted by the men who soldiered with me, and by the men who worked with me in the National movement”. This argument deliberately privileged the views of (masculine) fellow soldiers over female relatives...Pro-Treatyites characterized the women's discourse as both personal and emotional, and thus out of place in what purported to be a rational discussion of Ireland's future...This paradigm shift allowed Free Staters to denigrate both women and republicans for relying overmuch on this emotional language.'[146] Andrews wrote later, 'All the woman deputies had voted against the Treaty; their virtue was called in question by whisper, by rumour, by innuendo and by dirty jokes'.[147]

It is impossible to imagine what women such as Clarke must have felt, hearing their commitment and courage reduced to miserable, whining self-advertisement, and their expressed love for their relatives, and their immeasurable losses, seen as no more than emotional diarrhoea. Certainly they did express their private grief in public, to serve as an example to others, and to encourage more sacrifices for the cause, but this cannot deny the reality of their suffering. As Knirck writes, 'The Treaty made the legacy of Irish history, particularly its revolutionary martyrs, divisive within Sinn Féin'.[148]

When the Treaty bill was won, by 64 votes to 57, de Valera stood up and resigned as Sinn Féin President, taking his party completely by surprise. He seems to have thought he would be re-elected, but Clarke had a different view, and considered that this resignation was sheer vanity. He chose her to propose his re-election in the Dáil, which angered and astonished her. This episode indicates that de Valera understood her status within the republican movement, and used it without compunction when he needed that support. But Clarke was not a woman to be manipulated, and absolutely refused his request. The argument raged for some time, but she gave way when Seán T. O'Kelly begged her to do it, in the name of her martyred husband. She remembers, 'During all this time de Valera was looking

145 McCoole in Weeks & Ó Fathartaigh, *The Treaty*, p. 138.
146 J. Knirck, ‘Women’s political rhetoric and the Irish revolution’, in T. Hachey (ed.), *Turning points in 20th century Irish history* (Dublin, 2011) p. 49.
147 C.S. Andrews, *Dublin made me* (Dublin, 1918), p. 209.
148 J. Knirck, Women of the Dáil, gender, republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty (Dublin, 2006), p. 73.

over at me, and possibly his antagonism to me down the years since was born then...'.[149] She proposed him as briefly as possible, and as she expected he lost the vote; Arthur Griffith became the next President of Sinn Féin. The anti-Treaty deputies then left the room.

The Dáil established a committee of six to agree on the administration of upcoming elections. Clarke was the only woman chosen, and was elected Chair; this points to a degree of respect from the other members, Liam Mellows, Harry Boland, Seán MacEoin, P. Ruttledge and Séamus O'Dwyer. She was seen as a competent chairperson, who would not be pushed around. They sat for three weeks, but agreement as to the balance of Treaty and anti-Treaty candidates remained as distant as ever. One report dated 17 May 1922 outlined the positions of both sides; the anti-Treaty committee had accepted the idea of a coalition government, but objected to the proportions of nominations which was proposed by the other side. Ultimately an agreed election was accepted, on equal terms, and the 'Pact Election' took place in June 1922.

Clarke took an active part in the campaign, addressing public meetings in places such as Tipperary, and stood herself in her Dublin ward. She also headed for County Clare to canvass for de Valera, afraid that MacNeill, who was standing for the Treaty party, would head the poll. De Valera cautioned her not to attack MacNeill too vigorously, as it might win sympathy for him. She was annoyed that de Valera was still unwilling to work against his old comrade. De Valera did head the poll in Clare, but Clarke failed to win her seat in Dublin. 'She complained later that her fellow-republican club members did not canvass for her, but “they worked for the men”'.[150]

She writes: 'I was in the same boat as the other women TDs who voted against the Treaty, Countess Markievicz, Mrs O'Callaghan, Miss Mary MacSwiney, Dr Ada English and Mrs Pearse. Well, we all paid for our temerity in voting as we did. We were all women who had worked and suffered for the freedom of the country'.[151] (She was inaccurate here, as MacSwiney was re-elected.) This was the culmination of the legend of the intransigent, diehard women, unable to get beyond the bitterness of their personal losses; they were not granted recognition of their sincere convictions. Admittedly some of their contributions to the Treaty debates can be read as impassioned, if not hysterical, but indeed so were some of the masculine contributions.

The negative attitude to political women is illustrated in a letter from Stephen O'Mara, mayor of Limerick, writing to Boland about a public meeting to be held on 26 February 1922: '...bring no

149 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 264.
150 Clarke evidence in Sinn Féin Funds case, N.A.I., 2B/82/118 (43), 6 May 1948, p. 27.
151 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 268.

women with you as speakers'.[152] Knirck writes that '...pro-Treatyites used gendered arguments and stereotypes to bring republicanism into disrepute. As a result, republicanism became “feminized”; tarred with the brush of hysteria, irrationality and undue emotion'.[153] It is notable that Clarke, in her political career, managed to push through all that, and was not intimidated by it.

Civil War

The Civil War broke out on 13 April 1922, when the anti-Treaty I.R.A. seized the Four Courts in Dublin, and lasted until May 1923, with a death toll of six to seven hundred people, and a huge amount of damage to infrastructure, not to mention a reservoir of intense bitterness as families and communities split. Clarke visited the leaders in the Four Courts, to find out what their intentions were; she could not agree with their tactics, feeling the seizure was shortsighted and would last only as long as Collins allowed it to. Mellows and Traynor, the leaders, implied fairly rudely that the situation was no business of hers. 'I was surprised by the attitude of Mellows; he knew very well how closely I had worked with the leaders of 1916'.[154]

The memoir contains only about five pages on the Civil War, an indicator, perhaps, of an unwillingness to dwell on a tragic period. Clarke, of course, and her entire family, took the anti-Treaty side, and became targets of raids and searches by the National Army. These raids often seem, from archive descriptions, to have been even more vicious than those by the Black and Tans. Soldiers were raiding families who were known to them, and they knew how to hurt them most closely. It was a very personal fight. Clarke immediately began working with Cumann na mBan again, but Cumann na mBan had also split on the issue of the Treaty. McAuliffe writes: 'Despite an effort by the female TDs in the Dáil, no compromise...seemed possible. Kathleen Clarke proposed to chair a committee with five members from each side of the debate...This attempt failed, and with the convention and the TDs now all openly anti-Treaty, unity in Cumann na mBan was lost'. The pro-Treaty women formed a new association, Cumann na Saoirse.[155]

Harry Boland used Clarke’s house as his H.Q., she says without her permission. She warned him one day that troops were coming to her home, and he handed her a bundle of papers and left. Her son Emmet, then about twelve, volunteered to stuff them up his jumper and sat close up to the table, so the soldiers did not find them. She says 'I was very angry...Running through my mind was all I had

152 D. Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish revolution* (Cork, 2003), p. 292.
153 Knirck, *Women of the Dáil*, p. 2.
154 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 270.
155 M. McAuliffe, '"An idea has gone abroad that all the women were against the Treaty": Cumann na Saoirse and the pro-Treaty women 1922-3' in Weeks & Ó Fathartaigh, *The Treaty*, p. 168.

suffered at the hands of the British, and now my own people were causing me more suffering, and it hurt more because they were my own'.[156] She saved her papers. Emmet told me later how he had had to eat the extra fish for tea, so it would not be seen as enough for three people, and he had never since been able to eat fish. Boland was shot in July 1922, and took four days to die; Clarke sat vigil during those days with his mother and sister.

Clarke's epitaph for the Civil War is brief: 'The anti-Treaty forces were beaten everywhere, disarmed and imprisoned. Amongst those imprisoned was Liam Mellows, one of the purest patriots that ever lived. Cathal Brugha and Mick Collins, both patriots, went down in the fight'.[157] She had been arrested for one day herself, and kept in Kilmainham, 12 February 1923, but was rapidly released. She does not mention this arrest in her memoir, but it must have been very difficult to be back where her husband and brother had been arrested and executed.

The elected anti-Treaty TDs continued to meet sporadically during this period, regarding themselves as the existing Second Dáil, and refusing to recognise the newly-elected Third Dáil. They were now essentially a new political party, called Cumann na Poblachta, and sometimes meetings of the party took place alongside the 'Dáil' meetings. They did not move from their seats, but continued talking under a new Chair, when party business had to be discussed. Clarke saw this as a lot of play-acting, but de Valera insisted that it was constitutionally necessary.

Dorney quotes Hart as saying, '...the 124 Sinn Féin deputies elected in May 1921 had all been returned unopposed. The Second Dáil was, in truth, therefore, a poor basis on which to place popular republican sovereignty...[I]n October 1922, to formalise their position and to counter the allegation of a prospective anti-Treaty IRA dictatorship, de Valera, at Liam Lynch's suggestion, set up a civil and republican government, to which the IRA executive pledged its allegiance...de Valera was nominated as president of the phantom republic, with a Council of State “of nine men and two women”...It was Liam Lynch as IRA chief of staff who was unquestioned commander of the military organisation, and along with the the IRA executive (of which de Valera was not a member) the setter of military and strategic policy'.[158] A pragmatist, Clarke could not see how they could claim to be acting as a government, particularly once the I.R.A. refused to acknowledge any authority from the Second Dáil, and decided to act only under the control of its own Executive. The Republican Courts also ceased to function, as a new Department of Justice was established.

156 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 273.
157 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 274.
158 J. Dorney, 'Republican representations of the Treaty', in Weeks & Ó Fathartaigh, *The Treaty*, pp. 83-4.

An order of mandamus issued by Dermot Crowley, Judge of the Supreme Court, dated 5 August 1922, 'on behalf of Kathleen Clarke, Teachta Dála', calls on Eoin MacNeill, Speaker of the Second Dáil, to convene a meeting of that Dáil, and to attend the Supreme Court on 11 August 1922 to certify to the Court how he has complied with this order, or show good cause why he has not. It is difficult to see what this mandamus order was meant to achieve; the Second Dáil was effectively dead. The order was not obeyed. A later article by Seán Ó Faoláin refers to the 'hilarious absurdity of the shadowy Second Dáil in which (while Mr. Cosgrave in the real Dáil was making the laws as President of the Free State) Mr. De Valera was pretending to be the President of the Irish Republic but was in fact presiding at solemn scholastic arguments as to whether the Republic did, in fact, really exist'.[159]

The rump of Sinn Féin continued to hold meetings of the Standing Committee, trying to sort out new office procedures, and discussing the hand-over of Sinn Féin funds (a controversy which lasted for twenty years). A letter to de Valera from P. J. Little, dated 27 October 1922, in relation to a meeting the previous day, says, 'Mrs Clarke was not allowed to be a proxy as *Secretary* – but was allowed to act proxy for Austin Stack as an individual member of officer board. I think we cannot insist on Mrs Clarke acting as secretary as the precedents for such are doubtful. Proxies are only allowed for officer board – not for official positions. Still she has the minutes and read A de Staic's letter...' A further note from Little, dated 30 October, states that 'Mrs Clarke was to have read out your letter to Mrs Wyse Power but was prevented from doing so'. They were deciding on holding an Árd Fheis in order to election a new, properly constituted officer board; things were obviously in flux. Mrs Wyse Power was refusing to hand over the funds, and would not recognise the authority of the board: she 'could not recognise de Valera as trustee since conditions have changed since his appointment'. She retired from the board in November 1922. [160]

A subsequent Árd Fheis, held on 16 October 1923, held elections for Vice-President. Clarke stood, but was not elected. A discussion took place on whether the British had threatened publication of the negotiation documents during the Treaty talks, putting more pressure on Griffith and Collins. Mr Power stated, 'It is Mrs Clarke who reminded me of it. She said that perhaps there were secret documents that passed between those who wanted to give up the Republic, and that those were the documents they were afraid to have published'. Count Plunkett vehemently denied that this statement had any basis in fact, and that it was the Republicans who had insisted on the publication of all negotiation documentation, agreed to by Griffith and Collins: '"...we have been waiting ever since as Republicans for the publication of these documents" (Applause)'.[161] Clarke was apparently not averse

159 Sean O'Faolain, 'Éamon de Valera', *The Bell*, Vol X No. 1, April 1945, p. 2.
160 U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera papers P150/580.
161 U.C.D.A., de Valera papers P150/582.

to stirring the pot with a conspiracy theory. Sinn Féin continued to oppose the Irish Free State, and the weekly bulletins issued by its Publicity Department (headed by Mary MacSwiney) did their best to emphasise every failure and blunder, seizing on any sign that the new government was not popular.

A special meeting on 7 May 1925 proposed 'That we have heard with regret of the death of Miss [Ellen] Daly, sister of the late Fenian leader John Daly of Limerick, and aunt of the late Commandant Edward Daly, and that we tender to her relatives our sincere sympathy in their bereavement, and that copies of this Resolution be sent to Alderman Mrs Kathleen Clarke TD, Dublin and Miss Madge Daly, Limerick'.[162] Her aunt's death is not mentioned by Clarke.

One matter in which Clarke became involved was the proposed establishment of a Sinn Féin newspaper, *An Phoblacht*. All through 1925 plans were being made for this publication, a budget worked out, and an editor, Joseph O'Doherty, appointed. Many difficulties arose, such as the unavailability of a printing press, and constant interference with O'Doherty's plans. Clarke was part of an oversight committee, along with Markievicz, Brian O'Higgins, Cathal Ó Murchadha and Padraig O'Donaill, and they produced a report on the publication plans. The committee made recommendations to improve the financial basis of the newspaper, claiming that its circulation could be 60,000, rather than the suggested 17,000; it complained that the style of the paper would not appeal to the general reader, and suggested that staff pay should be cut. The committee also wanted a Committee of Control (one Cabinet member, two Comhairle members, two businessmen) to be appointed, to scrutinize everything before publication.

O'Doherty's response was predictable: 'The reference to inability of our paper to attract readers is without foundation...those features which the Committee found missing and which they claim would have such an enormous influence on the circulation of our paper have not been mentioned in their report'. He objected, quite rightly, that the plan in train 'could not reach its highest mark of efficiency under such a system of control as is suggested in the report...'.[163] O'Doherty sent his formal resignation to de Valera on 6 November 1925, and *An Phoblacht* was ultimately published under a new editor. I find it odd that Clarke agreed with this report; she must have been aware that a newspaper could hardly work under an interfering committee, delaying every publication until it had been passed and agreed. She does not refer to any of this in the memoir.

No matter how vigorous were the propaganda attacks on the Free State, emphasising every negative interpretation, Clarke was well aware that Sinn Féin was talking to itself. It was also suffering

162 U.C.D.A., de Valera papers P150/590.
163 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/21.

financial difficulties. It had won forty-four seats in the 1923 general election, as opposed to sixty-three for Cumann na nGaedheal. This was not too bad a result, but the party did poorly in subsequent by-elections. It was clear that the Irish population had voted against the use of physical force, after years of war and disturbance. Republicans were heading into a cul-de-sac if they did not acknowledge this. By 1925, the abstentionist policy which had been fundamental to the Sinn Féin constitution was being reconsidered.

In an effort to move things forward in a positive manner, Clarke suggested that they go all out on a campaign against the Oath to the King. This was a simple matter which was easily understood, and in that way they might force their way into the Dáil and parliamentary politics; it was surely undemocratic that their point of view should go completely unheard in the national parliament. However, her proposal was met with hostility; many Sinn Féin members would not have gone near what they saw as a British-constituted Dáil anyway. She occasionally recounts vivid dreams in her memoir, which could influence her decisions, and she now had one in which Tom urged her to continue to attack the Oath. She decided to resign from Cumann na Poblachta and start a new party with this mission, but de Valera sent Gerald Boland to her, saying that if she withheld her resignation they could work together on a new policy.[164]

Rumours had been swirling for some time that Sinn Féin was heading for a split, but a letter to the *Irish Independent*, 24 January 1926, unequivocally denied this:

'In political circles in Dublin it has been common gossip for the past few days that a big section of the party, if not a majority of its members, are now prepared to enter the Dáil.

'We, the undersigned, do not recognise the legitimacy of either the “Free State” or the Northern parliaments.

'The rumour, therefore, sedulously propagated despite repeated official denials that we, or any of us, purpose (or at any time contemplate) entering the Free State Parliament and taking the oath of allegiance to the British King, is without foundation.'

There are forty-nine Sinn Féin signatures to this statement, but Kathleen Clarke's is not among them.[165]

164 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 286-7.
165 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers 176/19 (27).

On 10 March 1926, de Valera resigned as President of Sinn Féin, and on 16 May 1926 he established the Fianna Fáil party. This split the remaining anti-Treaty ranks; twenty-one members went with de Valera.

Some undated notes in de Valera's archive try to explain his actions:

'...I hope it is understood that I have acted with the greatest reluctance. Nobody regrets more than I regret that I have to separate in this matter from some of the friends I have been associated with in the last ten or twelve years. In matters of this sort I had either to deny my own intelligence as to what should be done and to be false to my duty as I conceived it, or do what I have done. I have indicated at the start why it seemed impossible working inside the Sinn Féin organisation ever to reach a situation where we would not be confront[ed] by precisely the same difficulties. I for one cannot see where principle is involved....If of course any words from me would bring Republicans together and get us all united moving together, I need not tell you that I will never be slow in saying such words. So far my words have been of no effect, and then we have simply agreed to differ on this matter.'[166]

166 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/19 (32).

CHAPTER 3

POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE, 1926-1942

Fianna Fáil

According to Clarke, de Valera was not initially in favour of establishing a completely new party, and leaving the iconic name of Sinn Féin behind, but he could see there was very little alternative. If they could not enter Dáil Éireann, under whatever name, they were in a blind alley. Clarke had expected de Valera to work through the existing Sinn Féin party: 'I had not thought in terms of a new organisation...I was disappointed, but reasoned that it was a move in the right direction, and as such accepted it, though I still think my idea was a better one. From the time de Valera agreed with me a change was necessary, he made no attempt to consult further with me'.[167]

Clarke admits that her sisters in Limerick were very angry about the new policy; 'they condemned me very harshly for linking up with it, not knowing I was very largely responsible for it...Not that I cared who knew, I did not fear criticism, I always did what I believed right regardless of consequences'. Since she has already said that de Valera kept her out of the planning for the new party, she could not have been 'largely responsible' for it. Certainly, her suggestion may have planted a seed in de Valera's mind, but he was an adept politician, and must already have been trying to see a way out of the labyrinth. It was undoubtedly a courageous move for both of them to take, risking the rupture of many relationships with people who had fought side by side with one another. Kathleen Lynn exemplifies the breach in her diary entries: 'The momentous Ard Feis in Rotunda...decision whether or not a principle not to enter F.S. Parliament to be taken at 11 to-morrow. On whole good spirit, anxious for Peace but Scellig's recriminations & Mrs Clarke's vile. Dev v. Fair D.G.'[168]

Clarke's memoir says that part of her reason to keep quiet about her role was 'to shield de Valera. Some time before, he had been sneered at as being under petticoat government, that Miss MacSwiney was running him. I did not want that sneer repeated, with just a change of petticoat'.[169] It is very telling

167 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 288.
168 Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (R.C.P.I.) archives, Kathleen Lynn Diaries, 9 March 1926.
169 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 288.

that the presence of even one woman on an Executive could lead to such a sneer, and indicative of why the revolutionary women of that era found it so difficult to get any kind of hearing. MacSwiney did not join Fianna Fáil, becoming President of Sinn Féin instead, but the new party was supported by women such as Linda Kearns, Margaret Pearse, Countess Markievicz, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Dorothy Macardle. Such influential support would have persuaded many doubters, and women were important to the foundation of Fianna Fáil, whatever de Valera himself might have wanted.[170]

The new party was launched on 16 May 1926, at a meeting in Dublin's La Scala theatre. The aims of Fianna Fáil, as published, included securing independence, abolishing partition, restoring the Irish language, securing economic self-sufficiency and making Irish resources subservient to the welfare of the population. There was also an emphasis on rural development, the establishment of families on the land, and distributing essential industries into rural areas. Clarke threw all her energy and enthusiasm into building up the organisation, and must have been forcibly reminded of the early days of the I.N.A.&V.D.F., particularly in the area of fundraising. She subscribed five guineas, and the Tomás Ó Cléirigh cumann, which she established, subscribed £3. She spoke at a public meeting in County Dublin on 30 January 1927, according to one document, and may have spoken at more.[171] Undoubtedly she took quite a public stance on the foundation of Fianna Fáil.

On 1 April she attended a Policy Committee meeting, and on 24 June signed a statement concerning the Oath: 'The undersigned deputies, wrongfully debarred from taking their seats as representatives of the people because of their refusal to subscribe to an Oath of Allegiance for a foreign King, emphatically repeat their election pledge, that under no circumstances whatever will they subscribe to any such Oath'. De Valera was the first to sign this statement.[172] Clarke became a member of the National Executive, along with five other women. This could mean that the women were considered important enough to be part of the ruling body, but may have been simply to use their undoubted links with the early revolutionary period. Fianna Fáil needed to emphasise continuity, rather than a break with the past, because Sinn Féin was accusing them all of treachery. On 1 December 1927, Clarke suggested that a Finance Committee should be established; finance and fundraising were important issues for her, and she joined that committee. This became the most important committee in the organisation, and one in which she was a strong voice.

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170 In Dick Walsh's history, *The Party: Inside Fianna Fáil* (Dublin, 1986), seven women are listed in the index, only two of whom were party members, and not Clarke. She is mentioned twice in N. Whelan's *Fianna Fáil, a biography of the party* (Dublin, 2011), so things are improving slightly. Apparently only men founded Fianna Fáil.
171 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/352 (13).
172 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/351 (13).

By 1927 the Free State government was pursuing a strong policy of coercive legislation, and it was decided that Fianna Fáil had to oppose this. It was clear that the time had finally come to put fundamental principles aside, and enter the Dáil, in order to move a vote of No Confidence. Clarke was one of only two members who voted against this decision, on the grounds that she could neither take the hated Oath nor vote for others to do so. De Valera insisted that no-one needed to take the Oath in person, that it would be sufficient to sign the book containing the Oath. The other nay-sayer, Mr Victory, changed his mind, and Clarke, now the only outlier, was eventually persuaded to agree after several days of agonising: 'I found it a very hard decision to come to'.[173]

Following the General Election of June 1927, in which Clarke was re-elected, Fianna Fáil deputies presented themselves at Leinster House on 23 June 1927, without entering. De Valera announced that they would force a constitutional referendum on the Oath, launching a signature campaign. If 75,000 people had signed, the Government would have been put in an awkward position, obliged thereby to call a referendum. However, the situation was drastically altered by the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Justice, on 10 July, and a new Public Safety Act was passed. Would-be Dáil candidates would have to sign an affidavit before being nominated, swearing to sign the Oath within two months of election.

De Valera was appalled by the O'Higgins assassination. He realised that prevarication was no longer an option and issued a public statement asserting that the Oath was merely an empty, meaningless formula, and that no harm could be done by taking it. Clarke objected to this statement, as it sounded too much like an apology; if they were doing the right thing, why seek to justify it? And indeed the statement was interpreted by everyone else as an apology. Clarke herself took comfort from her family tradition: 'We could do as the Fenians did when they entered the British military and police forces with a definite object, do it with a mental reservation'.[174] One can imagine, though, what the rest of her family made of this decision; we have to imagine it, because the memoir does not refer to this aspect of her decision at all. Macardle was devastated, and resigned as Director of Publicity.

Fianna Fáil did enter the Dáil, signing the book, on 11 August 1927. According to her son Emmet, Clarke made a verbal statement: 'I want you to understand that I am not taking any oath nor giving any promise of faithfulness to the King of England, or to any power outside the people of Ireland. I am putting my name here merely as a formality...'.[175] The mental contortions were indeed extreme. However, the Dáil was immediately dissolved, and another election ensued. Clarke's position was

173 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 290.
174 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 290.
175 Letter, Emmet Clarke to Helen Litton, 1991 (n.d.)

noted bitterly by Kathleen Lynn: '2 September 1927...Good evidence now that Mrs Clarke bought by I.R.B., horrible that that is controlled fr. England...Oh that all untrue were rooted out!'[176] Lynn's diaries contain no reference to Clarke from that date until 1930, so there was quite a breach after years of friendship. Clarke lost her seat in the subsequent election, which shattered her faith in Proportional Representation. Nineteen candidates ran in Dublin North, for eight seats, and she had a very large first preference vote, running fifth after the first count, but she was not ultimately elected. It seems clear that her vote was a personal rather than a party one, based on her position and history, but that she did not attract preferences.

Clarke stood for Fianna Fáil in the Seanad elections of 1928, having been nominated by several Fianna Fáil cumainn in Dublin and other parts of the country. De Valera initally backed her candidacy, but shortly afterwards asked her to stand aside in favour of Mrs Pearse, who had asked for a Fianna Fáil nomination. Apparently the party could not possibly put forward two women out of five candidates. Clarke, very angry, could see no reason for this quibble, 'when women had played such a big part in the fight for freedom'. 'I had been promised the full support of the Party, and presumed they would keep that promise.' She refused absolutely to withdraw her candidacy. 'He then said, “This is your last word?” I said, “Yes, it is”. I got the impression that I was being tested to find out if I was the pliable type de Valera seemed so fond of gathering around him. Well, I was not.'[177] Mrs Pearse did not go forward.

Clarke was elected with the highest vote of all the Fianna Fáil candidates. The term was for nine years; the independent TD Alfie Byrne had persuaded her to stand, saying the work was less strenuous than in the Dáil, and would be interesting. An example of female solidarity (undoubtedly highly exasperating to party hierarchies) was provided by Jennie Wyse Power, a member of Cumann na nGaedheal; she gave Clarke her No. 1 vote, as the widow of Tom Clarke, although the two women had been on opposite sides during the Civil War.

In April 1928, Clarke stood again for the Dáil in a North Dublin by-election, when the TD James Larkin was disqualified for bankruptcy. Allowed to stand again, he launched verbal attacks on all the other candidates, alleging 'foul conspiracy and dirty politics'. He singled out Clarke for attack on the grounds that if she hadn't stood as a Fianna Fáil candidate, he could have united all working-class votes and would have been sure to win. In the event, he came third, with half of Clarke's 13,322 votes; Vincent Price of Cumann na nGaedheal won the seat.

176 R.C.P.I archive, Lynn diaries, 2 September 1927.
177 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 291-2.

A public letter from Clarke criticised Larkin for his intemperance, and denied any such activities: 'One would think Mr James Larkin the vaunted Anti-Imperialist, etc, would pour all his venom on the Imperialist, but no, all his venom is reserved for the woman who dared to challenge the accuracy of his statements, a challenge he ran away from, as he ran away from the Seat his followers elected him to, a thing by the way he is quite an expert at'. A Larkin supporter, Seán Ó Lumin, replied to her letter, asserting that '[Larkin] did more for the workers of Dublin than ever the Fianna Fáil party did'. [178]

This was a time of high unemployment and economic depression, and when voters were looking for optimism Clarke's speeches tended to hark back to the past, for example saying that 'the policy of Fianna Fáil is the policy for which her husband and brother gave their lives'. But Clarke and Larkin had history. Larkin had left Ireland in 1914, and returned from the U.S.A. in 1923. He insisted that he had travelled there at the request of Pearse, Connolly and Tom Clarke. However, 'this was met with criticism from William O'Brien and the widows Lillie Connolly and Kathleen Clarke...a pamphlet was published which was entitled "Some pages from union history: why Larkin went to America", disseminating their criticisms of his actions'.[179]

In 1930, Dublin Corporation was re-established after a period of suspension, and Clarke was re-elected as a councillor. Cumann na nGaedheal had the majority vote on the Corporation, and Alfie Byrne, although an Independent, was elected as Lord Mayor every year as long as this was the case. However, Fianna Fáil always nominated a candidate, and from 1932 Kathleen Clarke was nominated annually. Possibly she was chosen because it was a no-hoper contest, but she did have a higher profile than most councillors, even though she was getting on in years, and her presence continued to boost Fianna Fáil's republican credentials.

Clarke's income

It is unclear what Clarke's income was at this time; possibly her sister Madge assisted her. She had initially refused to take money from the I.N.A.&V.D.F., but later accepted an allowance. She rented a tobacconist shop at 16 D'Olier Street between 1923 and 1925, but it is no longer listed in *Thom's Directory* for 1926. In *Revolutionary woman*, she recounts how she was stopped and questioned by soldiers, and had a large sum of money confiscated, shop receipts she was bringing to the bank. She did not get it back for quite some time, 'which was a great embarrassment to me as I had little capital,

178 Letters, *Irish Independent*, 12 April 1928, p.8; 17 April 1928, p. 12.
179 J. Leddin, The labour Hercules: The Irish Citizen Army and Irish republicanism 1913-1923 (Dublin, 2019), p. 81.

and was entirely dependent on the earnings of the shop; I had put all the capital I had into it'.[180] This is the only mention of the business.

Following the Military Service Pensions Act in 1924, Clarke had been granted a signatory's widow's pension. Soon after this, she and Mrs Áine Ceannt applied for an increase in their pensions, as widows of signatories of the Proclamation, to have their families supported 'in a manner befitting them'. They added, 'At present we have been obliged to seek employment to maintain our homes, and this is hardly creditable to Ireland'. The widows' letter was considered by the Executive Council on 8 August that year. Cosgrave wrote: 'I have been thinking of £200 p.a. for widows, £100 per child...' The Minister for Finance replied that from a financial point of view the extra cost would be negligible, 'as there are only about a half dozen cases in all', but it was felt that the National Aid had already made comparatively generous provision for these families.[181]

Both ladies lobbied the Free State government again in 1927, and under Section 4 of the Army Pensions Act each pension was doubled, to £180 p.a., and the children's allowance was raised to £48 each.[182] Ten years later, a Pensions Bill in May 1937 proposed to raise the pension of a signatory's widow from £180 to £500 p.a., and the allowance per child from £80 to £250 p.a., until the age of twenty-five.

McConville writes: 'School fees were paid for a daughter of James Connolly until the end of 1918. At that point his widow was given £1450 to invest in order to provide herself with an income...Tom Clarke's widow Kathleen was similarly given £1500 in Dublin Corporation stock'.[183] In 1949 Clarke was granted a Grade A1 pension, based on 7/18 years of service, amounting to £70 11s 1d per annum. Since she was already getting £500 p.a., there was an abatement of 30%, £52 14s 10d.[184]

Clarke in Fianna Fáil, 1927-1932

Clarke was an active member of the Finance Committee from 1927, although she missed a number of meetings, probably through a mixture of family commitments and health issues; in summer 1928 she missed six meetings out of seven. She chaired the committee several times, when the official chair was absent. Seán Lemass was honorary Secretary, and the committee met weekly.

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180 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 275-6.
181 N.A., TSCH 3/454/29; U.C.D.A., Ernest Blythe papers 24/72 (2).
182 A. Matthews, Dissidents: Irish republican women 1922-1941 (Cork, 2012), p. 252.
183 S. McConville, Irish political prisoners, 1848-1922: Theatres of war (London, 2003), p. 485.
184 B.M.H. Military Service Pensions 34/7, file D 2421.

In 1927, the committee discussed a planned trip by de Valera to the U.S.A. He was given a detailed list of American subscribers, and £600 was requisitioned to cover his expenses. In February 1928, after a discussion on the question of expenses for speakers attending public meetings and other functions around the country, 'Mrs Tom Clarke was requested and agreed to submit a Resolution for consideration at the next Finance Committee meeting'. She later took an active part in the discussion of buying a car for the use of Mr de Valera, and it was agreed to purchase a second-hand Ford. There was a flurry of activity about increases in salary for the administrative staff, and the committee also dealt with financial matters relating to Fianna Fáil cumainn all over the country – cases of irregularity and missing receipts, not to mention petty thefts from head office.

In summer 1928 the party purchased 13 Upper Mount Street as a HQ, insuring it for £2000. Tenders were then sought for wiring and lighting the building, and the tender of Patrick Ryan of 204 Pearse Street was accepted, in the amount of £22 9s 6d, on the motion of Mrs Clarke. She also 'brought to the notice of the Committee certain legal proceedings being taken against her for an alleged arrest in connection with Personation in the recent North City Dublin Bye Election'. Ultimately, a decree for £20 was made in the courts against Clarke 'in connection with alleged wrongful arrests ordered by a Fianna Fáil agent in the North Central Bye-Election in 1928.' Presumably the party was responsible for paying this fine, not the candidate.

From May to October 1929, Clarke missed ten out of sixteen finance committee meetings. On 22 October 1929, the first meeting took place of the new Joint Committee for Finance and Organisation, but Clarke is not listed as a member. She attended few meetings in 1930 or 1931. She presided over meetings on 18 April 1932, 11 July 1932 and 29 August 1932. Fianna Fáil took over the government in the Irish Free State in March 1932, with de Valera as Taoiseach. Clarke was a member of the Organisation Committee, but seems to have left this committee by late 1932, having missed seventeen meetings out of nineteen.[185]

Clarke as Senator, 1928-1936

During Clarke's time in Seanad Éireann, Fianna Fáil was in opposition from 1928 to 1932, and in government from 1932 to 1948.[186]

185 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers, p 176/355-369.
186 Some elisions I have made in her contributions arise from her habit of repeating herself, or slightly altering a statement, for further emphasis. All quotes come from the Seanad Éireann records, available online.

Clarke spoke on the Juries (Protection) Bill (1929),[187] the Importation of Bacon Bill (1930), ('I am a protectionist'),[188] the Workmen's Compensation Act (1933)[189] and the Road Traffic Acts (1933).[190] She supported women's rights and working people's rights, as well as speaking for republicanism whenever she thought that Britain had been referred to rather too sympathetically. She laid an emphasis on practicalities, and on the view of the woman in the street. In relation to the Road Traffic Acts, for example, when the question of police wearing uniforms was under discussion, she pointed out that as a woman driver she would be very unwilling to stop for a man who signalled her to do so, if he was not in uniform.

In relation to the Expiring Laws Bill 1928 (Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act 1919), she said, 'I want to know whether British subjects are to be classified as Irish, and I further want to know if there is any restriction on the people coming over the border – any restriction on aliens. A great number of people come that way, and I do not know whether there is any check put on them.'[191] The reply, which probably did not please her, was that members of the Commonwealth were not regarded as aliens.

In 1929, in relation to an Appropriations Bill, she objected strongly to the appropriation of £25,000 for British military graves in Ireland, since she spent a lot of energy trying to raise money for the National Graves Association (founded in 1926), and resented that British graves should apparently be more respected. She asserted: 'We [the N.G.A.] find it very hard to get the subscriptions, because the people are so poor...If this is to be accepted as a principle imposed upon us, that British military graves have the first right and claim on Irish people's money, I, for one, should like to be taken as objecting'.[192]

In June 1930, she supported an amendment to the Local Government (Dublin) Bill 1929, in relation to local government elections.[193] The original Section had referred to a City Council of thirty-five members, thirty elected as ordinary members and five, called 'commercial members', elected by persons on the register of commercial electors. Clarke stated, 'I think it is a wrong principle to create, from among the people, a privileged class...My fear is that the principle of this Bill, which only affects Dublin, will eventually be applied to other things, such as the Parliamentary franchise, and there will be created a still larger privileged class'. She returned to the attack in 1933 while debating a National Health Insurance Bill: 'I have worked with those who were elected on the commercial register [for

187 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1929-07-03.
188 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1930-12-19/8.
189 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1934-01-18/2.
190 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1933-05-31/6.
191 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1928-12-13/8.
192 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1929-07-17/6.
193 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1930-06-04/6.

three years]...I have no fault to find with them as men, but I have not found in any one of them anything outstanding, anything that would say to me that these men are entitled to privilege'.[194]

Her resistance to a 'privileged class' here does not fit with her insistence in 1924, with Mrs Ceannt, that widows of signatories were entitled to an enlarged pension, but they would presumably argue that they sought the benefit for their children rather than themselves. Later, in the 1950s, although she would publicly have been the first to argue against using 'pull' to gain favours, she urged de Valera to give a public service position to her son, Dr Emmet Clarke, on the grounds that the state owed a debt to the Clarke family. She was battling to avoid the emigration of her youngest son to the U.K., but got no change out of de Valera. I cannot see how she could have expected to, but desperation might have overcome her scruples, and also her awareness of de Valera's stance on this kind of thing.

An important Criminal Law Amendment Bill was debated in the Seanad in 1934.[195] Clarke weighed in on the question of criminal assault and the age of consent for girls, which the government wished to set at fifteen, down from sixteen. Controversy arose from the government view that the Seanad should ignore advice given by the Seanad Special Committee on the Carrigan Report. This 1931 report on sexual offences had not been published, but some of it was reported in the media; it had made recommendations on such issues as the age of consent, the sexual abuse of children, the prosecution of prostitutes' clients, and the presence of more women on juries. Senator Clarke had been part of the Seanad committee, and it had recommended keeping the age of consent at sixteen. Since the U.K. age of consent was set at sixteen, Senator Kathleen Browne contended, 'we may have the strange case occurring that a girl on this side of the border can be assaulted at fifteen while a girl on the other side of the border will be protected until she is sixteen. The Minister might compromise and leave the age at least seventeen, and let us with all our posing about chivalry, modesty and all the rest, show that it is not mere hypocrisy.'

Clarke did not speak during the discussion on prostitution, but she did contribute to the debate on the complete banning of contraception. She had been responsible for the removal of the suggested ban by the Seanad Special Committee. It was not that she was in favour of contraception, but she objected in principle to outright bans, using the example of U.S. Prohibition. 'I have seen prohibition in another country where I lived, and I have seen the evil effects of it...I believe you will drive the trading in and the use of these things into secret and illicit channels in which you will not be able to get after them...human nature is a peculiar thing, and the minute you prohibit anything the human being is

194 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1933-06-14/7.
195 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-02-06/4.

inclined to rebel against it...we should be able to appeal to the higher and nobler and more spiritual side of the human being than that of prohibition.'

Clarke expresses touching sentiments about the nobler side of human nature, but it is hard for me to comprehend how she could, considering the events she had lived through, and also her experience of social work, visiting families whose already poor living conditions were exacerbated by large numbers of children. She must have met many desperate women, whose greatest fear was to find they were pregnant again. She had lost babies herself, and may have felt that healthy children were a woman's greatest prize, but must have known that an appeal to 'spiritual sides' was not a practical solution.

Clarke's stance on this issue caused much media comment, not so much because of her views, but because a woman was willing to speak publicly on such an embarrassing, indeed forbidden, subject. Senator Comyn insisted that the use of contraceptives was 'destructive of the race', and that this prohibition would have the full support of the country, unlike the prohibition of alcohol in the United States, but Senator Gogarty was trenchant in his opposition to the ban, on the grounds of women's health: '...I presume that the aspect of the prevention of disease [syphilis] was completely lost sight of by some people in the consideration of this matter...The alternative to unwilling birth and bastardy in Ireland is infanticide. That is what they have confronting them'. He applauded Mrs Clarke's courage in participating in the debate, calling her contribution 'most sincere'. He adds, 'I am glad that the Seanad decided to discuss this openly and not to hide it, as the Carrigan Report was hidden'. The ban on contraception was ultimately kept in the bill.[196]

Maguire states: 'Far from being ignorant of the vulnerability of children to sexual abuse in the first half of the twentieth century, lawmakers, jurists, and the public in general were well aware of the problem, even if there was little public commentary...The government's decision to suppress the Carrigan report and to suppress subsequent debate on the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (1935) derived less from ignorance of moral conditions throughout the country, or a desire to “contain” sexual immorality, than from a desire to prevent details of Ireland's “depraved” moral condition from reaching the pages of the foreign, and particularly the British, press.'[197] Clarke was brave to have taken a share of the Seanad's responsibility to report on Carrigan's conclusions; there was no commendation to be won here, and she must have known it. Maguire also alludes to the fear, among a masculine establishment, 'that amending the law in relation to the age of consent might hold men accountable for their sexual

196 M. Clancy, 'Aspects of women's contribution to the Oireachtas debate in the Irish Free State, 1922-37', in M. Luddy & C. Murphy, *Women surviving, studies in Irish women's history in the 19th and 20th centuries* (Dublin, 1990), pp. 214-15.
197 M.J. Maguire, Precarious childhood in post-independence Ireland (Manchester, 2009), p, 114.

behaviour or, worse, leave them open to blackmail or false accusations from predatory teenage girls'.[198]

Clarke's next controversy arose during the debate on the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Bill, April 1935.[199] She took exception to a remark about friendship existing between Ireland and England: 'Until she has learned to cease her bullying and trickery and to be generous to this country, and restore the rights she took from us, there will be no friendship between us and England'. Senator Browne, however, took issue with her: 'Whatever may have been the history of the country in the past, there is no use in dragging it up time and time again in order to hinder further the progress of this country...' But Clarke had her supporters, Pádraig Ó Máille stating, 'Senator Mrs Clarke gave expression to the sentiments of the great majority of the Irish people'. President de Valera, winding up the debate, said, 'Senator Mrs Clarke, wisely in my opinion, laid stress on the fact that though we desire these friendly relations, there are things at the present time which militate against these desires becoming effective'. He went on to speak about partition.

In June 1935, Clarke and Senator Healy co-sponsored an amendment to the Electricity Supply Bill, 1935, in relation to the erection of poles without the consent of the local authority, at the request of Dublin Corporation.[200] Clarke spoke eloquently about the rights of local authorities and the citizens of polite suburbs. However, Minister Lemass refused to accept the amendment, on the grounds that it would seriously retard the development of the E.S.B.'s business. If local authorities could insist on wires being laid underground, a more expensive process, many lines would not be supplied at all.

In July 1935, Clarke spoke in relation to the Widows' and Orphans' Pensions Bill, a cause close to her heart.[201] She was glad, of course, that such a scheme was being established, but felt that the amounts proposed were insufficient. She reminisced about her early vision of an independent Irish government, 'which would bring in a Bill for necessitous widows and children...with the main idea that in order to bring up children with right ideas and as decent citizens of the State, it was necessary to have the mother when she is an all-right mother, as she is in ninety-nine per cent. of the cases, provided with sufficient money to enable her...to keep her home together and look after her children. [Otherwise] she has to go out to work, and when she is at work the children are on the streets...I think it is a national duty in any country to see that the mothers of the children are enabled to remain in their homes which they would be able to do were their husbands living, and to rear their children as good citizens'.

198 Maguire, *Precarious childhood*, p. 142.
199 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-04-3/6.
200 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-06-05/4.
201 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-07-11/3.

It is perhaps surprising that Clarke felt that working mothers were problematic for their children, as she had of course always been a working mother while her children were being reared. When they were very young, she was spending hours in the family tobacconist shops, probably leaving them to the care of a maid. Her brother Ned, who stayed with the family for a while before the Rising, expressed the view that the Clarke boys spent too much time playing with local children in the streets, picking up bad language. The family in Limerick heard that they were neglected, and that Kathleen smacked them too often. Perhaps she was remembering those times, of not enough money, too much work, constantly failing to live up to accepted standards, when she would have welcomed more support.

In August, she spoke against her government, this time in a debate on the Irish language: 'I do not think it is sufficient for the Government to say that Irish is the national language. The fight to restore that language as the spoken language of this country should be continued on every front.'[202] In November she was on her feet again, speaking to the Nurses' and Midwives' Pension Bill, 1935.[203] The debate is interesting from a modern point of view in its attitude to women workers; in relation to a nurse qualifying for a pension after twenty years' work, for example, Senator O'Farrell stated '...at forty-one she can get married, if she gets anyone to take her at that age, and draw on her pension for the rest of her life. The fact that she has a pension will be an incentive, particularly to a farmer'. He clearly felt the pensions were unnecessarily generous.

Clarke herself had a more sympathetic view, based on personal experience. 'I know many cases of real tragedy in the nursing professon, cases of women who are neither in hospitals nor in institutions, but who serve the public to the best of their ability in their nursing capacity, and who, when they come to the age of forty-five or thereabouts, are broken-down women...They have been unable to make provision for their old age not because their pay is so very small, though it is, but because their work is so broken. They may get a case on which they would have four or five weeks' work, and when they leave that case they have to spend four or five weeks more waiting for another case, which brings the rate of their remuneration down very low altogether...I know an elderly doctor in a hospital who gave this advice to a young nurse: “Missy, get married if you can. Do not get old in the profession. The patients do not want you; they want a bit of fluff”. That may be funny, but it is really a tragedy...Very rarely do they marry as they are so wrapped up in their profession, and after years of hard life, when they reach the age of forty-five, they have to look forward to twenty-five or thirty years more of terrible poverty'.

202 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-08-01/21.
203 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-11-20/5.

Clarke was particularly forceful on the Conditions of Employment Bill, also debated that month.[204] There were several positive aspects to this Bill, including reduction of working hours and the provision of rest breaks, but Clarke saw these as simply a sop to the Labour Party, to gain its support. The main bone of contention was the question of restrictions on women entering certain industrial employment, and the woman senators strongly resisted these restrictions. Wyse Power was very definite: '... I do not think there is sufficient understanding of the reasons why women are driven to do this very hard work [stoking boilers]. They are driven to it by sheer necessity and, very often, they do it to help dependents'.

Clarke argued about equality. 'How you can agree to a section such as this [Section 16], giving the Minister power to legislate against one section of the community while claiming that you have established equal rights is a thing I cannot see. I do not understand Labour on this question...I think that they are very barren in – what shall I call it? – ability, when they can think of no other means of giving the poor men who are being shoved out of work a job except by bringing in legislation which is going to debar women from certain classes of work...The Minister said in regard to equal pay for women, that if that were established...that the men would be driven down to the same rate of pay that the women get. I cannot agree with that, because if the trade unions mean anything, if they have the power which I think they have, how could that happen if the men's trade unions stood behind the women's trade unions?

'Take all the people in this Chamber. The majority are married men, some of them with grown-up families...They have boys and girls. If legislation was brought in prohibiting their girls from entering, say, the commercial or the professional world, what would they think of it? Here you are bringing in legislation to do that in the industrial world, and there is no reason under heaven why that legislation should not be followed up in other directions...I do not believe that they [Labour] are following on the lines of their dead leader [James Connolly]. I do not understand this either as far as my own Party is concerned, because I believed that our policy was a big, broad, national policy, a policy that included equal rights for men and women'.

The women members were keenly alert to any restriction on women's rights, but they were up against paternalistic attitudes such as those of Senator Foran: 'I think the feminists have run riot. They have been extremely unreasonable in their criticism of the Bill...I saw women in Sweden carrying deals [planks], stoking ships, and acting as dock labourers. Do the feminists want that to come about in holy Ireland?...With the introduction of modern machinery, the little bit of fluff which Senator Mrs Clarke spoke of can handle all the grain required in the country...The modern machine is adaptable to the

204 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-11-27/9.

flapper and, consequently, the male is being thrown out on the scrap heap and man is deteriorating generally'. The Labour leader, Tom Johnson, refused to accept the need for equality in industrial employment, contending that this was often used by employers to disguise their wish to employ cheap female labour. In response to Clarke, he also referred to Connolly: 'It would not be difficult to produce numerous items, not originated by, but adopted and penned by, James Connolly, claiming and demanding certain legislation to restrict the exploitation of women in industry'. This seems to be missing the point; the women were certainly not advocating exploitation, merely equal opportunity.

The Bill moved on to Committee Stage in December and Clarke spoke again in favour of deleting Section 16, with its restrictions on the employment of women, particularly in industrial environments.[205] The debate was uniting women representatives who were otherwise of differing political views. Clarke strongly rejected Senator Foran's earlier accusation of 'feminism gone mad', saying that 'though sympathetic to the feminist movement, I never associated myself with it, publicly or privately, and it was unfair to claim that it was a feminist objection on my part...My objection to this is on national grounds...I base it on the fundamental objects laid down in the 1916 Proclamation. That Proclamation gave to every citizen equal rights and equal opportunities, and it seems to me that if you legislate against one section of the community, if you are going to curtail them in the way they are to earn their living, where are the equal opportunities provided for in that Proclamation?

'Another argument which Senator Farren used was that if this legislation was not passed we would have men minding the babies and keeping the house while the

women went out to work. My answer to that is that if men could do that job as well and as successfully as women, I do not see why they should not do it. It is most important work for the nation, though rather sneered at by men...The present Minister may have the most holy, the most idealistic and the most beautiful ideas about what he is going to do with the women, but he is only here for today or tomorrow. The next Minister may not have the same kindly feelings towards women that the present Minister has, and is putting a weapon into his successor's hands which he may use ruthlessly against the opposite sex....I would ask him to specify the industries out of which he is aiming to put women. I would be perfectly in agreement...if he said “I am going to prevent women from ever scrubbing floors and I will make men do it instead”.With that aim, I would be in absolute agreement, because scrubbing floors is an ugly, hard and badly paid job, and men do not want it.'

Senator Miss Browne joined in agreement with Clarke and Wyse Power: 'None of us, I think, wants to see the condition...where the man stays at home and the woman goes out to earn the bread for the

205 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-12-11/11.

family; but I, personally, know of many cases where that condition was an absolute necessity and where, if the women were prevented from doing certain work, it would mean great hardship and, possibly, the starvation of the family'. Johnson protested that since there was no real equality in the country, the weakest members of the community had to be protected from exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

Senator Comyn laid great stress on physiology: 'We know that there are certain industries for which women are more suitable than men. They have a deftness of hand and a power of endurance and physical faculties which men do not possess...We have heard of the woman blacksmith shoeing a horse. I hope I never see a woman shoeing a horse...The public have an interest in the physical health and in the attractiveness of the female sex'. (Senators: 'Hear, hear!')[206]

The women speakers had a much clearer idea of what this legislation would mean to families, as opposed to male representatives who had a more idealised view of family life, particularly in urban areas. One of the main considerations for the State, of course, was male unemployment and the lack of decent jobs for young men, apparently because young women cost less to employ. Minister Lemass stressed that this debate had been argued by the women as if it was a Constitutional principle, but in fact it was merely a question of practical necessity. The amendment was lost.

Undoubtedly the women in the Oireachtas fought an uphill battle every day, pitting themselves against an almost all-male audience whose instinctive reaction to any mention of women was to jeer and make patronising comments. Even members of their own parties did not necessarily support the woman members; gender made an impassable barrier. It would in fact be fifty-four years after the foundation of the State before a woman became part of the government; Constance Markievicz's ministerial appointment in 1919 had been an aberration, and owed a lot to her own determination.

Clarke had moved a long way from her original, more simplistic political aims. Surely neither she nor Tom, in their wildest dreams, could have seen a future when Kathleen, an elected representative, would stand in an Irish parliament and seriously debate a wide variety of topics affecting her constituents. Her point of view is mostly strictly practical, but her views on the shortcomings of the Free State, as opposed to the ideals of 1916, burst through from time to time; the Proclamation was always her lodestone.

206 Oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/Seanad/1935-12-12/5.

Clarke and Fianna Fáil in government, 1932-1942

While Fianna Fáil was in opposition, Clarke had supported most of its policies, but once it was in government, she found that all sorts of promises were not carried through, such as efforts on behalf of the Irish language and the issue of Partition. The civil service was supposed to be reorganised, and changes were promised in the education system, but nothing happened. Fianna Fáil in opposition had also condemned Ireland's attendance at the League of Nations, seeing it as a body controlled by England, but de Valera as Taoiseach began to attend the League, 'receiving very flattering attention from the British representatives', as Clarke says.[207] De Valera, who had a wider and more internationalist view, could envisage the influence that even a small nation like Ireland could exert in a body such as the League of Nations, but Clarke's view was much narrower. She was opposed to anything that Britain was involved in, and could not or would not see beyond that.

In 1935, when Ireland supported Britain's call for sanctions against Italy because of its treatment of Abyssinia, Clarke contended with de Valera that he should have bargained with Britain for Ireland's vote, in return for economic concessions. But de Valera insisted that if Ireland wanted justice for itself, it should also stand for justice for others, without conditions. His vote was quite a brave stance, as there was a good deal of popular support for Italy in Ireland.

When George V, King of England, died on 20 January 1936, the Speaker of Dáil Éireann proposed a vote of condolence, which was passed. Clarke was furious, and blamed de Valera for this proposal. She would have accepted it if he had done it in his capacity as Minister for External Affairs rather than as Taoiseach but, she says, 'he had no right to commit the whole country, through the Dáil, to his opinion. It made me mad, and it was not fair to the country'.[208] She was even angrier when she realised that the same proposal was being brought to the Seanad by Joseph Connolly, and she insisted on having her objection recorded: 'Before you put that to the House, at the risk of being classified as ungracious, ungenerous and bitter, and all the other adjectives which may be hurled at me, I wish to be regarded as dissenting from this motion'. She was the only Senator to do this, and it caused shock and dismay among the other Senators.

Clarke admits that she was trembling when she stood up to speak: 'it is not easy to do a thing which you know will be misunderstood, misinterpreted and condemned'. But she was never behind the bar when courage was needed on what, to her, was a matter of principle. She was fairly certain that many others were sympathetic to her position, but that party loyalty and discipline kept them in line. This

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207 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 294.
208 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 296-8.

was not a difficult decision for her, but she must have felt very lonely, cold-shouldered by her colleagues in the members' room after the vote. One often gets an image of her as a lonely woman, standing solitary even among people who had known her for years.

On 23 April 1936, the Seanad rejected de Valera's Removal of Oath Bill, on the grounds that it would be a modification of the Treaty, and therefore illegal. The Seanad was anyway 'repugnant to Fianna Fáil as one of the "bulwarks of imperialism" contained in the Treaty'[209], and de Valera abolished it on 12 May 1936. Fianna Fáil had given him the authority to do this, but he had promised to bring it back to the party for a vote before making the decision. Clarke says, 'It was indeed a surprise; I had had such confidence in the undertaking de Valera had given. He had always seemed so meticulous about keeping a promise. I had been at a Party meeting that morning and not a word had been said about abolishing the Senate'.[210] This is rather overstated; she clearly never really trusted de Valera, and nothing he did would surprise her. She was now out of a job, and thought it odd that of the six Fianna Fáil Senators, she was the only one who did not get a paid position after the Seanad closed. In fairness to the party, she was always one of the awkward squad, continually critical of the party's direction on numerous issues. It was probably felt that loyalty works both ways.

Considering the part she had played in the early years of Ireland's fledgling democracy, and the development of Fianna Fáil in the teeth of virulent opposition from former close colleagues, Clarke must have been feeling particularly heartsick and isolated. She had been through intense and bitter arguments with members of her family, particularly her sister Madge, on such issues as leaving Sinn Féin or attending the annual 1916 commemorations at Arbour Hill, accused of betraying her sacred dead. She does not seem ever to have had many close friends; Constance Markievicz had died in 1927, and other woman friends had moved away from the political stage. She seems to have mended fences with Kathleen Lynn in 1930, when she interviewed Lynn about St Ultan's Hospital for a newspaper article.[211]

Her alienation from Fianna Fáil was confirmed in December 1936, when King Edward VIII abdicated, and the necessary approval by Dáil Éireann (as a Dominion) for the new King George VI was passed without a dissentient vote. She was still an important name in the party, though; in January 1937 she was on a sub-committee reporting on amendments to the National Executive members' pledge. In April 1937, when de Valera returned from a fundraising tour in the U.S.A., Clarke is listed as one of

209 B. Farrell (ed.), *The creation of the Dáil* (Dublin, 1994), p. 252.
210 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 299-300.
211 R.C.P.I., Lynn diaries, 31 January 1930.

the party delegation which welcomed him on his return.[212] On 26 April, the National Executive voted condolences to Mrs Clarke on the death of her mother Catharine in Limerick, a bereavement not mentioned in *Revolutionary woman*. Her name next appears on 19 July 1937, when she attended a meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee. After the thirteenth Árd Fheis, the National Executive met on 28 November 1938, but Clarke's name is not found on any of the committees.

At a meeting on 20 February 1939, 'Mrs Clarke raised the question of the handing over of the British Legion Memorial Park to the Board of Works',and it was agreed that a motion would be listed for a future meeting. The British Legion motion was eventually discussed on 20 March. Seconded by P. Ó Máille, it referred to the memorial park as 'a symbol of the perpetuation of the British connection' and said that 'acceptance of it would be contrary to the spirit, wishes and ideals of those who elected the Government; and to the aims and objectives of this Organisation, which are to break the connection with England'.[213]

On 5 June 1939 Clarke attended a meeting of the Organisation sub-committee, and on 19 June attended the Finance Sub-Committee. On 27 June 1939 she was elected first woman Lord Mayor of Dublin, and this presumably restricted her availability for further meetings. The National Executive, on 3 July, passed the motion, 'That the congratulations of the National Executive of Fianna Fáil be extended to Mrs Clarke on her election as Lord Mayor of Dublin'. She does not seem to have attended any further meetings between 1939 and 1943, when she resigned from the party.

Clarke and the Constitution, 1937

One of Clarke's most important confrontations with de Valera and Fianna Fáil was over the 1937 Constitution proposals. She, along with all the woman Oireachtas members, vehemently opposed the sections dealing with the position of women, which were heavily influenced by Catholic doctrine. De Valera protested that no-one valued women more than he, but that they needed protection in this harsh world. For women who had fought and suffered through the revolutionary period, this was like a red rag to a bull. They were being treated like children, without agency of their own. They were used to fighting their own battles, and they were not going to shirk this one, church or no church, party policy or not. It was not only women who protested: Professor O'Sullivan, speaking on the Second Reading, said,'It is provided that the Dáil shall be elected by every citizen of the State, so far as they are not

212 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/29.
213 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P 176/345 (6th) (13th National Executive).

disqualified by law; but what is to prevent the Oireachtas passing a law disqualifying women on account of their sex?...There is nothing to safeguard their rights...'[214]

The columnist 'G.G.' (Gertrude Gaffney) wasted no time in eviscerating the draft Constitution's articles on 'women's place'. She gives a voice to those very angry women who felt they had earned respect during the fight for Ireland's independence: '[de Valera] was glad enough to make use of them to transport guns and munitions, to carry secret dispatches, and to harbour himself and his colleagues when it was risking life and liberty to do any of these things'. She also pointed out the important role women played in relation to social developments: 'Do you think we should have school meals, free milk, school medical inspection, organised welfare help for mother and child, old age pensions, widows' pensions, and so forth, if it were not that the demand for these things came from women pioneers...If it were left to men our social services would be in a sorry state...'[215]

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, for whom Clarke had great respect going back many years, asked her to write a public letter, pointing out that women were to be in a lower position than they had been in the 1922 Constitution. The 1922 Constitution had been gender neutral, and promised equality as the Proclamation had done. Clarke wrote the letter, although she knew this would be an unpopular move in Fianna Fáil. She felt strongly that the Proclamation, so important in her life, was being degraded and ignored, and referred back to that rather than the 1922 Constitution. The letter, sent from Limerick, was read out at a well-attended meeting held in the Mansion House, Dublin, on 21 June 1937, organised by the National University Women Graduates' Association. It read:

'I am sorry not to be able to attend the meeting, as I would like to help in the protest against the attempt to take from women the equal rights and opportunities accorded to us in the 1916 Proclamation. I shall be with you, though, in spirit, applauding your efforts.

'The rights accorded to us in that Proclamation were the result of considered opinion, after lengthy deliberation, of the minds of seven men whom I have heard President de Valera say were supermen. They were not intended as a mere gesture to be set aside when or if success crowned their fight for freedom.

'The language is simple, unequivocal, and can be interpreted only one way, whereas the language in the proposed Constitution may be interpreted in more ways than one. Therefore, I think it is up to every Irishwoman to see that no man or group of men robs us of the status enshrined in the Proclamation.'

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214 N.A.I., TSCH/S 9704/5.
215 ‘G. G.’, ‘A woman’s view of the Constitution’, *Irish Independent*, 7 May 1937, p.5.

When this letter was published[216] it predictably brought down a storm on Clarke's head; she had disrespected The Chief. A National Executive motion under her name on 6 September 1937 requested a ruling as to whether members of the Organisation and Party 'have the right of free expression of opinion on any matter of National importance, which is not a Party or Organisation question'.[217] It was agreed that such free expression of opinion was not contrary to rule. However, arising out of this Sean O'Donovan proposed a motion to be considered at the next National Executive meeting: 'That this Executive considers that support for the Constitution at the recent Plebiscite was an obligation on all members of the Fianna Fáil organisation and Party.' This motion was considered on 13 September, but no decision was made.

Clarke's own cumann, Tomás Ó Cléirigh, passed a motion at a meeting in her absence, on 23 September 1937: 'That this Comhairle Dáil Ceanntair of North East Dublin, Fianna Fáil, disassociates itself from the published opinions of one of our public Representatives, Councillor Mrs T. Clarke, with reference to the Constitution of Éire, sponsored by President de Valera, agreed to by the Fianna Fáil Party and enacted by a free vote of the people [on 1 July]. We repudiate such utterances believing they have had a demoralising effect on our Organisation in part and the public at large, as a whole'.[218]

In *Revolutionary woman* Clarke writes that she attended a meeting of the National Executive on 8 November, 'and pointed out to the Chairman that the President, Mr de Valera, had stated publicly that everyone was free to act as they wished on the question of the proposed new Constitution, and that I had asked for a direction before taking any action...Had I been told I was bound by the organisation to support the proposed Constitution, I would have resigned, in order to be free to act as I thought right on a question I felt very strongly about'.[219] The National Executive could only agree with her again, since it had already done so in September. However, the date of her actual letter belies this sequence of events; it was published in the *Irish Independent* in June, but she had not approached the Executive for a ruling until September, so she had in fact spoken against the Constitution without being certain of her permission to do so. The passage of time may have confused her recollection. I believe she would have gone ahead anyway, permission or not – this was a fundamental issue for her, of women's rights and opportunities.

Clarke often asserts that she plunged into things and got into trouble, but there is no doubt that she could lay the ground carefully when she wanted to; she could act politically when required. She had told the Executive that she would resign from the party if she could not speak freely, and they were

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216 'G. G.', Mrs Tom Clarke's letter to the meeting in Dublin', *Irish Independent*, 25 June 1937, p. 7.
217 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/245/20.
218 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 302-3.
219 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 304.

forced to admit that de Valera had made it clear that all members could speak their minds. 'And so', she writes , 'the heroes of...Cumann Tomás Ó Cléirigh had to bottle their wrath'.[220]

In November, after a new National Executive had been elected, Messrs E. Timmons and G. Hughes, secretaries respectively of the Ó Cléirigh and the North Dock cumainn, having put down a motion on 'the attitude of Mrs Kathleen Clarke to Bunreacht na hÉireann', were advised that 'the Executive had considered this matter on previous occasions and it was decided not to take any action'.[221] Clarke resigned from the Cumann she had founded; she remained on the National Executive, 'but felt I was not very popular there'. As noted above, she attended no meetings between 1939 and 1943; her mayoralty made a decent excuse, and permission had been granted to Dublin councillors to miss Executive meetings if D.C.C. meetings were scheduled for the same date.

On 20 December 1937, the National Executive considered suggesting to the Executive Council that 29 December should be declared a public holiday, to mark the coming into force of the new Constitution. It was agreed to ask de Valera to issue a statement to the Press on the subject, *Mrs Clarke dissenting* [my italics].[222]

Shonk has written that 'Fianna Fáil operated outside public policy frameworks to reify, or even dictate, gendered tropes regarding the appropriate behaviour of Irish women in the domestic and public spheres, thereby adding to the already extant pressures and dichotomies placed on women by Catholic-Irish patriarchy'.[223] He produces a more emollient view of the Constitution, arguing that Fianna Fáil rhetoric offered women a crucial role in economic development, 'via expressions of everyday living in the city and on the farm'. Women were 'envisioned as being vital to the construction of an independent Irish state'.[224] However, that is not how large numbers of contemporary Irishwomen, particularly the veterans of the republican struggle, saw the Fianna Fáil project.

Lord Mayor of Dublin, 1939-1941

Kathleen Clarke was elected first woman Lord Mayor of Dublin on 27 June 1939, on the casting vote of the outgoing mayor, Alfie Byrne, who was retiring after nine years in that position. He was an independent politician, whose political views were very different from her own, but he probably felt that it was time Dublin entered the twentieth century. Political lines were less tightly drawn in Dublin

220 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, op. cit.
221 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/355-69, 8 November 1937.
222 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176/345, 20 December 1937.
223 K. Shonk, Ireland's new traditionalists, Fianna Fáil, republicanism and gender 1926-38, (Cork, 2021), p. 73.
224 Shonk, Ireland's new traditionalists, p. 77.

City Council than in the Dáil, and more co-operation took place between parties. Certainly Byrne could see beyond party politics, although he was probably more in sympathy with Cumann na nGaedheal.

The *Irish Times* was nervous about the possibility of Clarke being elected Lord Mayor, writing, 'We are not particularly eager to see a Fianna Fáil representative in the Mansion House, if only because the party which reintroduced "politics" into municipal affairs has given us thereby little encouragement to expect sound administration from it. Furthermore, a Fianna Fáil Lord Mayor – or Lady Mayoress – would have hard work to guide the destinies of a body which does not possess a Fianna Fáil majority, or even a majority in favour of Fianna Fáil. There is danger, however, that Mrs Clarke will succeed unless the United Ireland councillors are able to compose their differences and to vote solidly in favour of an agreed candidate. Our own hope is that the present Lord Mayor will be induced, at this eleventh hour, to reconsider his decision to retire'.[225] However, Byrne had determined that it was time for him to go.

Thanking him for his vote, Clarke said that over her years in Dublin City Council, Byrne never forgot 'that he had in my person the representative of a man whom all Ireland honours. It is because I represent that man, not anything that I believe within myself, that he has put me in this chair here tonight'. Her first statement was therefore to recall her husband Tom, to whom she felt this honour was due. She also said, 'the honour you have conferred on me has been worth living for. It brings my mind back to a time some years ago when I lay very near to death after a sojourn in Holloway Jail – so near to death that my old friend who is now dead, Father Albert, was with me. He was so surprised that I did not really go over the border that he said, "My dear child, you are saved for something wonderful". Tonight I have seen that wonderful thing which he prophesied...'[226] She promised that she would not be partisan, but 'the man or woman who puts Ireland first will be the person who will get a better show from me than those who put their first allegiance to a country not within Ireland'. She guaranteed to be as free from party feeling or partisanship as any human could be; the interests of the City and the citizens would be her first consideration.[227] Of course, she was already fairly semi-detached from Fianna Fáil, and this would become more evident during her mayoralty.

Clarke asserts in her memoir that Oscar Traynor, another Fianna Fáil councillor, 'did all he could to prevent me from being nominated for the Lord Mayoralty. He tried in various ways to get me to withdraw, but did not succeed. I had not been very keen on getting the nomination hitherto, but when I

225 *Irish Times*, 27 June 1934.
226 'Mrs Clarke returns thanks', *Irish Independent*, 28 June 1939, p.12.
227 '1916 leader's widow Dublin's new Lord Mayor', *Irish Times*, 28 June 1939, p.1.

saw Oscar Traynor's efforts to change the order of things I got angry'. Clarke was not a woman to suffer opposition meekly, particularly if she suspected an anti-woman agenda. It is unclear why Traynor expressed this animus, but it may date back to the occupation of the Four Courts in 1922, when Clarke tried to persuade Mellows and Traynor that it was a bad tactic, and they refused to listen to her. Traynor had been co-opted to the council rather than elected, and only then joined Fianna Fáil. Possibly he saw Clarke as a competitor in future elections, and realised the high profile that being Lord Mayor would give her. Certainly he seems to have been very passionate about the matter; Clarke continues, 'he became so insulting to me when I refused to withdraw, at a meeting in Alderman Tom Kelly's shop, that Councillor Dr Joseph Hannigan protested; he said he resented Oscar Traynor's attitude to me. They nearly came to blows over it'.[228]

Clarke's first act as Lord Mayor was to refuse to wear the Lord Mayor's Chain, because it had been presented to Dublin Corporation by King William III, and a smaller chain had to be hastily found for her. (Possibly Byrne began to regret his noble action.) The Ulster Protestant League in Belfast later wrote to her, suggesting that she send King William's chain to them for safe-keeping, but she wrote back that it was the property of Dublin Corporation, and she had no control over its disposal.[229]

Clarke was now in the highest-paid political position in the country, with a salary of £2,500. Byrne had been provided by Dublin Corporation with a secretary and a steward; Miss Mary O'Sullivan acted as secretary to thirteen Dublin Lord Mayors, including Byrne and Clarke. Byrne, a busy man, had also hired an additional secretary, a maid and a chauffeur from his own pocket.[230] Clarke also employed as secretary Maureen O'Carroll, and appointed a Chaplain, Fr Dermot, OFMCap.[231]

The election of a woman to such a prestigious post caused huge excitement, even featuring in the *New York Times*,[232] and many newspapers ran interviews with her. To the *Irish Press* she said 'I am terribly keen on the fact that women, if given the opportunity, could do as well in positions in public life as the men. I have great faith in my own sex'.[233] As always in relation to 'celebrity' women, her personal appearance was commented on; R.M. Fox wrote, 'A slightly-built, erect figure with grey hair, Mrs Kathleen Clarke – Dublin's new Lord Mayor – has clear-cut features which reveal her indomitable character. Though her eyes light up with animation, they have a sadness in repose, for she has lived

228 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 304-5.
229 'Why Lord Mayor says "no", *Irish Times*, 12 August 1939.
230 A. Quinlivan, *Vindicating Dublin* (Dublin 2021), p. 204.
231 Maureen was a daughter of Molly O'Sullivan, of Cumann na mBan, and Molly's brother Seamus was married to Clarke's sister Laura.
232 *New York Times*, 22 July 1939.
233 I.P. woman reporter,'Will not wear robes', *Irish Press*, 28 June 1939, p. 9.

through some of the bitterest experiences which a woman can face'.[234] When she attended the Rambert Ballet at the Gaiety Theatre, the *Irish Times* wrote, 'In full evening dress, Mrs Clarke's smart dark gown was relieved by the gold mayoral chain, and a pearl necklace. Her long white evening gloves toned with her well-groomed marquise coiffure'.[235]

Clarke would always describe herself as a nationalist first and a feminist second, but she laid her cards firmly on the table in the *Dublin Evening Mail*, where she was interviewed under the heading 'Fashion and Gossip in Dublin Today', and was described as wearing 'a light blue tweed redingote over a patterned frock...her black hat was trimmed with pale blue flowers'. She asserted: 'On the surface, women have equal rights in this country. But, under the surface, there is a great feeling against women, especially in public life...Nobody would dispute the fact that it is very nice for a woman to be supported in comfort by a husband or father. But there are many women who have neither; and there are many women who would be a great loss to public life if they allowed domestic cares to occupy their time to the exclusion of all else'.[236] She developed this point in the *Irish Press*, saying, '...nowadays...women have entered into every walk of life with men, and have shouldered the same responsibilities, and are working shoulder to shoulder with them. If a woman is competent to rear intelligent men, she should be competent to sit on any Board with them. Women in politics tend to keep them clean, they fight for clean administration'.[237]

Of course, her election was not welcomed by everyone, as evidenced by an article by 'Dubliner': '...though Mrs Clarke enters on the term of office with the good wishes of all the community, much will be expected of her – perhaps too much. A famous Irish cynic of the last century once remarked that popularity could only be achieved by a mediocrity. This may, or may not, be true; but in a city like Dublin, of such wide divergent views, an individualist would scarcely fill the role of Lord Mayor with any degree of success'.[238] Councillor Belton was quoted as saying, 'It was business capacity they wanted, not “rattling the bones of the dead”.' He asserted he had followed Tom Clarke into the G.P.O. on Easter Monday, 'but what good was a man dead twenty years to 100,000 unemployed?'[239]

Clarke paid tribute to the talents and energies of Alfie Byrne, saying to the *Evening Herald*, 'I could not possibly attend the number of functions that he managed to fit into one day. I want to conserve my strength...' She was aged sixty-one, and had not been in good health for many years; her life had been

234 R. M. Fox, ‘Mrs Tom Clarke: her career’, *Irish Press*, 30 June 1939, p. 8.
235 *Irish Times*, 25 July 1939.
236 Dublin Evening Mail, 3 July 1939.
237 ‘Women in public life: reply to critic’, *Irish Press*, 24 August 1939, p. 5.
238 Cutting from *Irish News*, n.d., family sources.
239 *Irish Times*, 28 June 1939, op.cit.

despaired of more than once. In a speech to the first Dublin branch of the International Red Cross (26 October 1939), she said, 'Knowing men as well as I do, I do not hope to wear the chain long. When the 1916 fight was over, the Proclamation showed that women were going to get their rightful place. As the war [of Independence] progressed, women were needed, and they got their place, but since then they have rather fallen back. The struggle for freedom has yet to be accomplished, that is first with me, and after that, women's rights'.

Clarke was titled 'Lord Mayor', because a Lady Mayoress is wife to a Lord Mayor. Quidnunc suggested that a new title should be devised on the model of 'Taoiseach' or 'Uachtaráin', which does not alter with the gender of the holder. He pointed out that she was now also Chief Magistrate, Admiral of the Port of Dublin, and a 'Right Honourable'.[240] At the Dublin Corporation annual Christmas Day Mass, held in the Pro-Cathedral, Clarke was the first woman to sit in the chair of honour.[241] She was also the first woman to attend a meeting of the Dublin Port and Docks Board, as Admiral. In her remarks to the meeting, held on 14 July, she said that no matter how many political differences they had, they would all agree that the welfare of Ireland came first. She stated that being Lord Mayor made her feel very proud, that the sacrifices which her family had suffered were well repaid by the people in Dublin. She was also glad that she could hand over to others an honour which had never before been offered to a woman in Ireland.[242]

A family crest was hastily researched for a plaque to be placed with the collection of mayoral arms in City Hall. The Ó Cléirigh plaque, with its motif of a robin bearing an olive branch, is apparently the first coat of arms to have a motto in Irish: 'Síothcháin do bheirim chughaibh' ('I bring peace to you'). Peace was not, however, the dominant note of her mayoralty. Moving into the Mansion House on 19 July, with her son Emmet, she immediately ordered the removal of a portrait of the young Queen Victoria, which had hung in the entrance hall for many years: 'I felt I could not sleep in the house until she was out of it, she had been so bitterly hostile to Ireland and everything Irish'.[243] She sat up all night with her sister Laura until the removal men arrived in the morning, and Victoria's portrait, along with those of other British monarchs and nobility, was taken from the house. They were all lined up along the railings outside, much to the bemusement of early commuters passing in the trams.

This direct action hit the front pages of both Irish and English newspapers, and Dublin ratepayers reacted vigorously. They had been suspicious of her republican background from the moment of her election. Letterwriters were permitted to use pseudonyms then, and correspondents such as 'Patriotic

240 Quidnunc, *Irish Times*, 3 July 1939.
241 ‘Dublin leads nation in great act of homage’, *Irish Press*, 25/26 December 1939, p.5.
242 ‘Dublin Port and Docks Board welcomes first woman member’, *Irish Times*, 14 July 1939, p. 4.
243 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 305.

Anti-Fanatic', 'Plain Citizen' and 'One Who Is Pained' complained for weeks about the removal of the paintings. She was accused of having a 'pettish school-girl mentality', but struck back by quoting the example of her uncle John Daly, who as mayor had removed the royal arms from Limerick city hall in 1898. She was carrying on a family tradition. She received support, too; the *Dublin Evening Mail* pointed out that Alfie Byrne had carried out many structural improvements in the Mansion House without anyone suggesting that he had no right to do so.[244]

The first signature in her Visitors' Book was Éamon de Valera, and she made formal visits to President Douglas Hyde, the Apostolic Nuncio, and the two Archbishops of Dublin. Her state of health curtailed her activities somewhat, but her press-cutting album is full of meetings, speechs, presentations, prize-givings and theatre trips – all the usual adjuncts of a mayoralty. Her stylish costumes were often a matter of comment, since as a trained tailor she made most of her own garments. Whenever she bought clothes, she made it clear that she was a strong supporter of Irish manufacturers, and one of her evening dresses was a full-length gown of Limerick lace.

She attended such events as the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, where she urged people to subscribe to Dublin Corporation's housing loan to alleviate the 'slum evil'.[245] She had a great interest in child welfare; she opened several health clinics, and hosted a St John's Ambulance party for 250 mothers at the Mansion House, as well as providing Christmas Treats for under-privileged children. At a meeting of the St John Ambulance Brigade, she referred to child welfare as an urgent issue. She addressed Craobh na hAiseirge, the Irish language revival movement, with an appeal for a greater use of Irish in daily life, although she could not speak Irish herself: 'We will use the English in the commercial sense because it is a commercial language, but in God's name let us use our own language to speak with each other every day of the week'. As Senior Vice-Chair of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, she attended its prizegivings, and called for greater development of 'our own music' to encourage national and patriotic feelings.[246]

On 1 November 1940 she laid the foundation stone for a scheme of council flats in Charlemont Street, as recorded in Lynn's diary: 'Mrs Clarke, Lord Mayor laid stone her first. Sally K. presented bouquet, silver trowel. Was lovely.'[247] The flats were funded by public subscription. The plaque with Clarke's name on it remained there for decades, but is there no longer, since the flats are being redeveloped.

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244 Leader, *Dublin Evening Mail*, 1 August 1939. Clarke herself redecorated the main drawing-room, in which Byrne had held stout-drinking parties (family sources). The paintings were rescued by the Office of Public Works, and have since been restored and rehung.
245 *Irish Times*, 29 November 1939, p. 11.
246 *Irish Press*, 1 December 1939, p. 10.
247 R.C.P.I., Lynn diaries, 1 November 1940.

She donated two copies of her husband's prison memoir, *Glimpses of an Irish felon's prison life*, signed by her, for a raffle in aid of the Dublin Brigade of the Old I.R.A. She drafted an address by Dublin Corporation to the Archbishop of Dublin-elect, Dr John Charles McQuaid, placing on record their sincere pleasure at his elevation. She was also involved in discussions on the siting of a new Cathedral for Dublin, but this never eventuated.

However, all of these activities were completely overshadowed by the outbreak of war in September 1939. The Irish Free State, remaining neutral, declared an 'Emergency', with consequent food rationing and fuel shortages. Clarke headed appeals for charities and hospitals, appealed to the striking Municipal Employees' Union to provide essential services, and mediated in a milk strike in November 1939. A Mansion House Coal Fund, to which she contributed £25, provided fuel, and the Irish Red Cross, which Clarke headed, helped victims of German bombs which fell on the North Strand, Dublin in May 1941, killing thirty-five people.

As the inevitability of war loomed, Clarke said in an interview, 'It is all very well for England to denounce Herr Hitler, and to talk of the atrocities and brutalities, but it is up to us to point out to Irish children that atrocities and brutalities began in Ireland by England and by the people England sent across to Ireland'.[248] In a speech made while presenting G.A.A. medals in Cork, she said, 'I don't think I should let the night pass without mentioning that we are today – the whole world – faced with a very terrible war, and that we in Ireland have to congratulate ourselves that we are and hope to remain out of it'.[249]

Clarke supported Ireland's policy of neutrality, but was suspicious that the de Valera government was 'neutral towards the British', giving clandestine support to Britain in the form of, for example, weather reports. This was quite true, but was not fully appreciated until many years after the war. Worried about the consequences of offending Germany at a time when it seemed Hitler might be victorious, she expressed disapproval when de Valera sent the Dublin Fire Brigade north after Belfast was bombed in April 1941. She was notorious in Dublin for maintaining friendly relations towards the Axis legations, hosting, for example, an official dinner for Eduard Hempel, the German legate. Her nephew, Éamon Dore, a student in U.C.D., wrote to his father that he had met his aunt Carrie Daly, up from Limerick to stay with her sister in the Mansion House: 'There was a dinner last night for the Italian Minister and a few others'.[250] The Japanese legate, Setsuya Beppu, noted the anniversary of her

248 *The Strand*, 7 July 1939.
249 *Cork Examiner*, 4 September 1939.
250 Letter, E. Dore jnr to E. Dore snr, 10 December 1940, Dore Archive.

husband's execution each Third of May, by presenting her with a flower.[251] She presided over an anti-conscription meeting on 27 May 1941.

Her still strongly republican attitudes led to disagreements with de Valera's policies in relation to the pro-German I.R.A. She agreed that the I.R.A. should have called off their British bombing campaign when the war started, although they were merely following Tom Clarke's doctrine on British difficulties being Irish opportunities, but she opposed the setting up of military courts to try I.R.A. offences. As Lord Mayor, she was part of a deputation which appealed for the release of Patrick McGrath, an I.R.A. prisoner on hunger strike, and visited him in hospital when he was freed. However, McGrath was later caught up in a raid in which a policeman died, and this time he was sentenced to death, along with Thomas Green (alias Francis Harte), in August 1940. Clarke's representations for mercy were refused, and on the execution day she drew the blinds of the Mansion House, lowered the flag to half-mast, and ordered the City Manager to fly the City Hall flag at half-mast as well.

This was a very public repudiation of government politics by a member of the government party. She justifies it by saying, 'McGrath's execution to my mind was a crime, and I had to make a protest...It seemed to me that in executing men like McGrath, the government were carrying out the old British policy of killing or exterminating in one way or another all the best of our people'.[252] She continued to oppose government policy in this area, appealing for the reprieve of Tomás MacCurtain, son of a Lord Mayor of Cork who had been murdered by the Black and Tans in 1920; she provided a room in the Mansion House for the use of the appeal committee. Sentenced to death for shooting a policeman, MacCurtain was reprieved through pressure of public opinion. Clarke also headed a public appeal for two I.R.A. men, Barnes and McCormick, sentenced to death in Britain for a bomb which had killed five people in Coventry, but no reprieve was granted there.

Early in her term, in September and October 1939, Clarke had been advised to rest, so her health must have been giving cause for concern. She underwent a serious operation (unspecified) in March 1940, followed by a long illness, but was re-elected as Lord Mayor on 2 July 1940, and served out her second term. Before the 1940 election there was an attempt to replace her. J. J. Byrne said, '... it was a danger in existing circumstances to elect a delicate lady like Mrs Clarke to fill the chair. They wanted a man in the chair in the present circumstances – one who would be able to stand up to anything. To ask Mrs Clarke to face such a position was a danger to her and the city'. Her response was characteristic: '...at one of their most critical periods she had been in a position of trust even greater

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251 Family sources.
252 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 309.

than the one she was in now and when the dangers were much greater. In that period she had not been found wanting no matter what her health was like. She assured them that their trust in her would not be abused'.[253] She was ill for some weeks in June 1941, and announced that she would not stand a third time.

It would be interesting to know what her family made of her elevation to Lord Mayor, but we have little information about that. Her sister Laura was with her when the paintings were removed from the Mansion House, and Laura's daughter (also Laura), aged sixteen, stayed there for some weeks, and accompanied Clarke to such events as theatrical performances. Ever the one with the blunt word, her aunt informed her that at sixteen she had had at least four boyfriends, and expressed surprise that her niece did not have any. Young Laura was thrilled when Clarke was visited by the famous American cowboy star, Gene Autry; she surreptitiously tried on his cowboy hat in the hall. It is probable that other family members came to visit the Mansion House over the two years, and young Dore mentions in his letters several meetings with visiting aunts: 'I met Auntie Ag and Auntie Madge walking or rather straggling slowly down Grafton Street in the usual manner, looking at all the windows. They...were going to Auntie Katty tonight'.[254]

When her second term of office ended, Clarke decided to resign from Fianna Fáil, feeling that its policies and her own views had moved too far apart. She wrote to de Valera on 3 May 1943, choosing the twenty-seventh anniversary of her husband's execution to do so. Among other things, she said, 'You are going farther and farther away from the Fianna Fáil policy. I regret having to part from a group I worked with and to whom I gave faithful service, a group I had such a high opinion of and who I thought appreciated integrity, honour and straight-forwardness'. She was informed by letter that her resignation would come up for discussion at the next Executive meeting, which was held on 10 May. Under 'Correspondence', it was noted that Caithlín Bean Ní Cléirigh was resigning her membership: 'Mrs Ní Cléirigh to be informed that her letter was read and the resignation was accepted'.[255] There seems to have been no personal contact from the party at all, or from any of its members, surely a churlish response to a distinguished member after so long.

In her resignation letter, published on 9 May, she complained about failures to reduce taxation, reform the civil service or resolve the Border issue, as well as the abandonment of Fianna Fáil's original policy towards the establishment of a Republic. She also objected to the method of teaching Irish in schools, feeling that compulsion was not the best method of fostering regard for the language. The

253 ‘Mrs Tom Clarke unanimously re-elected’, *Irish Press*, 3 July 1940, p. 1.
254 E. Dore jnr to E. Dore snr, 16 November 1939.
255 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers P176 345/1943/62nd, 10 May 1943.

only government policy with which she any longer agreed was that of neutrality.[256] On 17 May 1943 the *Irish Times* reported that Clarke, before her resignation, had been asked to stand in the general election for Fianna Fáil in Dublin North, but had refused.[257]

On 6 September, a motion moved by Joseph O'Connor proposed: 'That we, the members of the Dublin City Council North-East Comhairle Ceanntair, in ordinary meeting assembled, having considered all the facts relating to the resignation of Mrs Kathleen Clarke from the Fianna Fáil Organisation as it appeared in the Dublin press, unanimously decided to request the National Executive, Fianna Fáil to call on Mrs Kathleen Clarke to resign her membership of the Dublin Municipal Council in accordance with Rule 61 of the Fianna Fáil Constitution'.[258] The motion was carried, but Clarke did not obey it. She simply ceased to be a Fianna Fáil member.

Of her retirement from Fianna Fáil, she writes: 'I liked public life, and liked having a say in the affairs of my country, and felt I had earned the right to do so, but the qualities which made for success in the war for independence were no longer needed'.[259]

Life after Fianna Fáil

Clarke's political career had more or less ended. Standing as an Independent, she lost her seat on Dublin Corporation in 1945, and failed to win a Senate seat when she was nominated by the Technical School Board in 1943. In fact, she did not receive even one first preference vote, and afterwards received letters from some Fianna Fáil deputies apologising for not voting for her. They were bound by party allegiance, as were members of other parties who might otherwise have voted for her. It is possible that there was still an anti-woman bias, because a contemporary article could state: '...the question is whether Irish women have yet realised their proper function as builders of a modern humane society. In my youth they spent their energies in hysterically urging the men to fight and kill each other. Today they are working finely in various organisations for the betterment of rural life...[but] the majority of women could never find time for these absorbing activities. Women will never make more than a partial headway in active or political pursuits'.[260] Clarke could still be tarred with that outworn brush.

256 *Irish Times*, 9 May 1943.
257 *Irish Times*, 17 May 1943, p. 1.
258 U.C.D.A., Fianna Fáil papers, P176/345, 6 September 1943.
259 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 311.
260 ‘Exile’, 'Women in public life', *The Bell*, Vol. 5 No. 4, January 1943, p. 268.

In 1948 Clarke stood as a Dáil candidate for Seán MacBride's new Clann na Poblachta party, because it must have seemed to her to hew more closely to the Republican ideals of 1916. However, she failed to win a seat; aged seventy, she would have been a relic of the past to post-war voters. The younger Clann na Poblachta candidates resented the fact that older Republicans, with a background in the early upheavals of the century, seemed to be relying on their transfers to get elected. In the event, however, it was the younger candidates who won seats, not the old guard. Clarke had been on the political stage for decades, and politics had moved on. It was unwise of her to stand in 1946, but she may have seen a final chance to speak for her republican ideals, and those for which her husband had died.

Clarke remained on the mailing list of Clann na Poblachta until at least 1959, when she received a letter seeking support from two other 'old stagers', Dr Patrick McCartan and The O'Rahilly (son of the 1916 activist). After the party changed its name to Cumann na Poblachta, it wrote to her again, but it is not known to what avail.[261] She remained active when it came to remembrances of the revolutionary period; a note in the de Valera archives refers to a 1945 report on operations in the G.P.O. area during the Easter Rising, ratified by garrison members, and states that it contained comments by Kathleen Clarke.[262]

On 21 May 1951 Clarke wrote to the outgoing Fine Gael Taoiseach John A. Costello, saying: 'During your period of office you have created a peace which has been unknown in the country for many years and you have initiated a spirit of co-operation which is essential, especially in the present international uncertainty, for our survival as a nation.' She says she had always intended giving him her first preference vote, and now is offering herself and her car to be available in any capacity which might be useful in the upcoming election campaign. I do not know if this letter was sent, or was followed through, but it is certainly a demonstration of political pragmatism (or possibly revenge).[263]

In May 1956 she was one of several signatories to an 'Open Letter to the Irish People', the tone of which was rather hysterical: 'A check of personnel, particularly in the key Depts of Finance, Justice & Defence, will confirm that hostile R.I.C. elements and their associates have turned the Civil Service into a “preserve” for themselves and for their children! Social Services without a means test is nothing new in this country! No wonder official decisions are at variance with the interests of the Nation! Ministers of State are more or less powerless once general directives have been given; they are not supposed to interfere in the day-to-day working of the Public Service, it would be undemocratic! So it was a simple matter for the British after all!...Does it not bring to mind the Algar Hiss case and the

261 Family sources.
262 U.C.D.A., de Valera papers P150/497. This report was intended to go to the N.L.I., but in 1954 was searched for unsuccessfully, according to a note in the file. For more on Clarke’s role in remembrances see Chapter 4.
263 Family sources.

infiltration of American State Depts by Communist agents!' etc, etc. The first signatory is Mícheál Ó h-Aonghusa of Conradh na Gaeilge, followed by Dr Lucey, Dr A. O'Rahilly, Mrs Clarke and Brian Ó h-Uiginn.[264] I don't believe Clarke was senile at this time, although she later developed dementia, but it is possible she was losing some grip on reality; this is not a sensible letter to have signed. I do not know if it was published.

Clarke was still seen as someone of influence in relation to republicanism, and in 1963 she was contacted by the Irish Political Prisoners' Release Association Campaign (Belfast and Dublin), soliciting her support for their activities. She wrote a letter to the newspapers saying, 'It is time, I think, to forget all past differences and remember only that those prisoners are suffering as a result of their desire to abolish partition of their country and re-unite their beloved land...if we Irish can feel and subscribe to the needs of people suffering in other lands, surely we can feel for and help our own.'[265] She had always taken an interest in the welfare of prisoners.

The extent of Kathleen Clarke's other activities throughout her political career cannot be listed briefly; it demonstrates an extraordinary range of interests. As a member of Dublin Corporation she served on the following boards: St Ultan's Hospital (1930-1), Grangegorman and Portrane Mental Hospital Board (1933-8, 1942-4), the Berwick Home, Rathfarnham (1935-8), the Rotunda Maternity Hospital (1936-8), the Dublin Orthopaedic Hospital (1936-8, 1942), the National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street (1941-4), the Irish Tourist Association and the Royal Irish Academy of Music. She sat on the following committees: City of Dublin Child Welfare Committee (1931, 1936-8, 1942), City of Dublin Old Age Pensions Committee (1931-2, 1942-4), Lane Pictures Committee (1931), Playground Committee, Old Age Pensions Committee, City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (1933-4, 1942), Estates Committee (1934), City of Dublin National Monuments Committee (1942), Irish Tourist Association and the new City Hall Building Committee (1938). She was a founder member and activist with both the National Graves Association and the Wolfe Tone Memorial Fund.

She remained aloof from feminist groups such as the Women's Political and Social League, which fought for the causes she was also arguing for in the Senate. Despite the many shortcomings of the political parties in which she was active, she remained loyal to the ideals of an equal republic, in which women would automatically be of equal worth to men. It was only when Fianna Fáil moved, in her opinion, too far from those ideals that she ultimately deserted the political system. She never conceded that membership of a party meant you had to blindly accept all that party's decisions (which

264 Family sources.
265 Letter dated 2 May 1963.

would annoy any party), but she obviously felt the need for a structure if change was to be achieved; a lone voice would remain in the wilderness.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHALLENGES OF MEMORY

'Memory is a trap for egotism...I have discovered that after all, though the gate opens, I cannot enter into that lost enchanted country...someone I can see as impersonally, as detachedly as though I had never met her before, saw and did these things of which I am going to tell...Certainly it cannot be written impersonally. If one were to try and keep the teller out of it, it would be like a room without a fire, a book without a heart. Because it is a life'.[266]

Memoir deals with personal observations of particular events. Like an autobiography, it depends entirely on the trustworthiness of the author, but there is more opportunity for discrepancies to be pointed out, as many people will remember the same events. Both autobiography and memoir contain an implicit contract with the reader that truth is being told, but it is a subjective truth. Some facts will be checkable, but there are no sources for checking the accuracy of a memory. Diaries or letters, written in real time, are much more useful in this way. Everyone is wise after an event, and knowledge of consequences may influence how an event is recalled.

Autobiography may be more reliable than memoir, as more personal, but both sources need to be scrutinized carefully. It would be a trap to decide that a particular source is absolutely trustworthy; everything must be checked. The author of any memoir has an agenda. Perhaps they feel that some truths have not yet been told, or wish to right a perceived wrong, but personal interest or prejudice must always be taken into account. We all wish to put ourselves in a good light, and have to work hard to be completely honest all the time.

Historians must also be aware of the risk of bias in themselves. There is rarely just one truth, and other versions must be permitted to exist. The historian should look for what may be left out, and compare various versions. Everybody spins, even if it's just a matter of omission or editing. Can the completely objective version ever exist? Dissecting a memoir, you are being guided by the narrator, who has chosen the chronology, the emphasis, the events that they see as being most important. It is necessary to look at the gaps, at what is untold, and try and discover why. A lot also depends on whether the

266 Elizabeth Countess of Fingall, *Seventy Years Young* (Dublin, 1991), p. 8.

author of the memoir is seen as a reliable narrator. Women have historically been seen as less reliable memoirists than men, for any number of cultural and educational reasons. Particularly when the main readers and collectors are men, the accounts of women can be seen as exaggerated or hysterical, or simply not as important as those of men.

In relation to conflict memoirs, a strong factor is the masculinity of war. After the First World War, 'the military idiom formed a dominant mode of discourse, but it was clearly masculine language to which the women had no real access...But an important part of the soldier's idiom revolved around suffering, and the women could speak this language...Unable to speak as soldiers, women instead substituted the idiom of familial or personal suffering; the suffering of the home front replaced that of the battlefield'.[267] This division was certainly very evident in the Treaty debates, when male speakers emphasised their own part in the fight, and women pushed back vigorously against the notion that only men could understand tragedy and loss.

Kathleen Clarke's memoir, *Revolutionary woman*, is particularly interesting because it comes from someone who deals with both the personal and the political, the peace and the war. The book contains descriptions of domesticity and family life, but also the horror of violence and loss, and the gradual attrition of the expectation of progress. The core of the book is a love story, which temporarily wrenched a tough-minded revolutionary from his singleminded mission, and ultimately led his widow to a high-profile political career. Along the way she fights prejudice, disparagement and double-dealing, but also describes acts of nobility and courage. She did not want to write a 'womanly' book, but it is clearly not a book written by a man. It does not get lost in action and drama, and is not afraid to deal with the tedious nuts and bolts of politics and administration. This is the voice of Kathleen Clarke, sometimes strong and determined, sometimes stubborn, peevish or argumentative, rarely giving way to weakness, and completely individual.

Bureau of Military History

The Bureau of Military History (B.M.H.) was established in 1947, and embarked on the project of collecting witness statements from as many revolutionary participants as possible. Initially it was planned only to use those of military personnel, but many civilians volunteered their memories as well. Ultimately, by 1957, 1773 witness statements had been collected, and it took until 1921 to assemble and co-ordinate the material. In 2001 the B.M.H. moved from the Department of the

267 J. Knirck, Women of the Dáil, gender, republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty (Dublin, 2006), p. 85.

Taoiseach to the Military Archives, under the Department of Defence. The statements were made available to researchers and the public in March 2003.[268]

Witness statements

The witness statements largely concentrate on the Easter Rising and the War of Independence, but the Civil War is avoided; the guidelines specifically excluded it. However, it was not just up to the participants to remember. As Aiken says, reflecting on the dearth, over many years, of recollections of the Civil War, '...the silence of the Irish Civil War was not necessarily a result of revolutionaries' reluctance to speak, but rather due to the unwillingness of the architects of official memory – journalists, historians, politicians – to listen to the testimony of civil war veterans...even as the Civil War divide set the fault line in Irish politics, public figures and politicians repressed personal stories and burned their civil war papers....Children of revolutionary veterans in particular shared the sense that "the whole country seemed to have taken a vow of silence"'.[269] Politicians made pleas from the floor of the Dáil for people to move beyond the hurts of the past, in order to work for the benefit of the whole population.

With regard to the establishment of the B.M.H., the advisory committee of historians did not always agree with the politicians.[270] They complained that the method of collection of the witness statements was very slow, and that the civil service fieldworkers collecting the statements lacked a sense of history.[271] There were arguments about the confidentiality clause, which was automatically applied to all statements, whether the witnesses wished it or not. How long were they to remain confidential? Until the last eye-witness had died? This policy was fought over for ten years. Many documents were frozen until 'the final work of writing' was begun, whenever that would be. This postponed the examination and discussion of these statements to a future generation, and the historians involved felt betrayed and indignant.

Much of the oral testimony departed from the guidelines about the Civil War. The Ministry of Defence was under pressure to protect living personalities, and references to the Civil War could be a time-bomb threatening to blow up the whole undertaking. However, the historians involved insisted that both sides of the conflict should have equal representation on the steering committee. The truth must be told, even if suffering was exposed, and they did not want the project to degenerate into a P.R.

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268 C. Crowe, 'How do we know what we know?', *The Stinging Fly*, Issue 33 Vol. 2 (Spring 2016), pp. 51-60.
269 S. Aiken, Spiritual wounds: Trauma, testimony and the Irish Civil War (Dublin, 2022), p. 2.
270 The committee included Richard Hayes, Robin Dudley Edwards, G.A. Hayes McCoy and Theodore Moody.
271 U.C.D.A., Dudley Edwards papers LA22 IV B 333-5.

exercise for the government. Professor Dudley Edwards felt strongly that the nation needed a collective catharsis, and that silence would simply let resentments grow and fester. Encouraging truth-telling is not a perfect solution, and can raise more problems, but it is a more forward-looking and creative approach than blank silence and forgetting: nothing is truly forgotten.

Interviewers were urged to allow people to tell their stories in their own words. The instruction ran, 'A witness must, under no circumstances, be persuaded to agree to anything which does not accord with his own personal recollection ['his' was taken for granted]. There must be no attempt to smooth out or adjust a story, in order to make it more plausible or readable'. When planning the questionnaires, and choosing the participants, it was originally assumed that the men were always in the thick of the action, and women on the sidelines, but it emerged that many of the women were right where the action was as well. It is notable that the murky history of sexual violence during the revolutionary period is only now being explored by women historians, but it has been in plain sight in the witness statements all along.

It could be assumed that Kathleen Clarke made such a witness statement, but in fact there is none listed for her, although her family archive contained an early draft of one. She was interviewed several times by officers from the B.M.H. between 1947 and 1951, and was presented with a bound copy of her various statements, but she seems to have withdrawn permission to use them. Nothing in the file tells us why.[272] However, she does make appearances in many other witness statements. Some of these deal with the Daly family in Limerick, and others have been cited above in relation to Clarke's provision of money and assistance, and to her work with Cumann na mBan (see Chapter 2). Gonne MacBride's statement mentions Clarke's state of health in Holloway, and Jerry Golden describes the establishment of the I.V.D.F. Eily O'Hanrahan (later O'Reilly) talks about meeting Clarke in Kilmainham before her brother Michael's execution, and about their work in the I.N.A.&V.D.F., while George Fitzgerald gives details about the operation of the Dáil courts.[273]

John J. Keegan, carrying a despatch from MacNeill on Easter Sunday morning and seeking to deliver it to other leaders, decided to try Clarke's shop: 'I enter. I was looking for Mr Clarke or Mr Pearse or even Mr Plunkett. Are any of them here? I sensed that I was diagnosed as a policeman and so got a

272 B.M.H. File no. S 144. Clarke seems to have been suspicious of the aims of the B.M.H., offering to assist it only 'if I get a guarantee that the history will be the truth...not a doctored history [as] rumour has it...' Letter, Clarke to Mr McDunphy, 4 June 1947.
273 M.G. McBride, B.M.H. WS 0317, p. 8; J. Golden, B.M.H. WS 0522, pp. 2-3; E. O'Hanrahan, B.M.H. WS 0270, p. 11; G. Fitzgerald, B.M.H. WS 0684, p. 38.

very poor showing from Mrs Clarke (this was not to be wondered at for I looked the part and she had never seen me before)'.[274] Indeed, Mrs Clarke must have been in a high state of tension at the time.

Bridget Foley (later Martin) recalls meeting Clarke in Ship Street Barracks, after her arrest in Easter Week. Another inmate was making a lot of noise: 'I told her that one of our friends – Mrs Clarke – was very ill and asked her to shut up and give her a chance to rest...Mrs Clarke could speak of nothing but the coming execution of the leaders, which she was convinced would take place. At 2am she was summoned as her husband was to be executed that morning'.[275]

Pension applications

A distinction can be made between the witness statements and the later pension applications.[276] The witnesses were people who responded to the widespread radio and newspaper appeals. They deliberately set out to recall their revolutionary years, making sure that details were remembered, and naming people whom they were afraid might be forgotten. The pension applications, on the other hand, beginning from 1924, were written by people who did not necessarily want to remember personal trauma or the horror of events they had witnessed, but who were compelled to revisit the past because of the possibility of a pension. Many of them were living in very poor circumstances, often as a result of their activities during those years, and even a few shillings a week would make a difference to them.

In 1928, Fianna Fáil protested against giving pensions to 'able-bodied men', but changed their minds once in power, and made sure that pensions were extended to their own supporters.[277] In 1934, pension applications were extended to anti-Treaty fighters. By the end of 1935, 51,880 applications had been made. Those applying for pensions, male or female, had to have their accounts confirmed by a senior officer, and it seems to have been much harder for the women to find a senior officer to do this. Of course people made the best of their stories, but they needed corroboration from old comrades and officers, so serious exaggeration was unlikely. Of 5,390 female applicants from 1934 on, when Cumann na mBan members were finally allowed to apply, 1,629 were successful. The women were only allowed to apply for the lowest ranks of pension, D and E.

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274 J.J. Keegan, B.M.H. WS 0217, pp. 6-7.
275 B. Foley, B.M.H. WS 0398, p.13.
276 Military Pensions Act, 1924; Military Service Pensions Act, 1934.
277 M. Coleman, 'Military Service Pensions for veterans of the Irish revolution, 1916-23', *War in History* 20 (2), 2013, pp. 201-21.

The definition of what constituted 'active' or 'military' service was the stumbling-block for members of Cumann na mBan, who engaged in activities that were not necessarily documented or susceptible of proof. Military service was defined simply as carrying a gun and being involved in actual battle, and it was assumed that no woman engaged at this level. However, as the women attested, acting as couriers, providing 'safe houses' or concealing weapons were extremely dangerous acts. And some women had engaged in battle: Margaret Skinnider's application under the Military Service Pensions Act 1924 was refused as the Act was 'only applicable to soldiers as generally understood in the masculine sense', but she had been a sniper, badly wounded during the Easter Rising.[278] Skinnider was eventually granted a pension of £80 per annum in January 1938, fifteen years after her first application.[279] Clarke endorsed Skinnider's pension application, attesting on 10 November 1936 that Skinnider was a member of Cumann na mBan between 1919 and 1921, and Director of Training from 1921.[280]

My grandfather, Captain James O'Sullivan of Company B, First Battalion, Irish Volunteers, received a number of letters during those years, urging him to confirm accounts of engagements and skirmishes. These letters were later deposited with the B.M.H. His own application for a pension was endorsed by his sister-in-law, Clarke.[281] She wrote on behalf of Nora Connolly, daughter of James, pointing out that 'her husband is idle through no fault of his own and they have nothing. It is an awful position for James Connolly's daughter'. Nora was awarded an E grade pension in October 1941.[282] Clarke also provided references for a number of Cumann na mBan members.

Overall, of 80,000 pension applications, 18,000 or so were successful, quite a small proportion; the requirements were rigorous, for both men and women.

Remembrances

Much historical discussion took place over the decades following the revolutionary period, particularly coming up to the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966. Anniversaries cause reflection, and jog memories loose. Some of the veterans queried whether the pain and loss was all worth while – they were not necessarily happy with the Ireland which had resulted. But it emerges that this was certainly, while not exactly happy, a time when they, as young people, felt most alive, most useful, engaged in important work as compared to their later everyday lives.

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278 M. Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland* (New York, 1917, republished 2016), p. 30.
279 Skinnider, Doing my bit for Ireland, p. 35.
280 Skinnider, *Doing my bit for Ireland*, pp. 25-6.
281 B.M.H., W.M.S.P. 34 REF 59330 James J. O'Sullivan.
282 D. Ferriter & S. Riordan (eds.), *Years of turbulence: The Irish revolution and its aftermath* (Dublin, 2016), p. 191.

A letter from Arthur Ormsby to the *Irish Times* criticises an allegation by Ruth Dudley Edwards that 'the families of [the revolutionary] leaders scattered or suppressed papers'. Ormsby asserts that while Pearse, MacDermott and Connolly left no worthwhile documents, those of MacDonagh and Ceannt are freely available in the National Library of Ireland, along with those of MacNeill and Plunkett, the latter two subject to permission. 'Survivors such as Mrs Tom Clarke, Denis McCullough, Bulmer Hobson and Senator Dr J.J. Ryan are, to this writer's personal knowledge, only too anxious to help by interview and/or letter.'[283] Clarke continued to bear her own witness throughout the 1960s.

An example of such exploration of the past is seen in a letter from Cathal O'Shannon to Denis McCullough in 1953, with the news that Radio Éireann would broadcast a talk by him (O'Shannon) on Tom Clarke in Easter Week. He encloses a number of questions for McCullough to answer: 'Can you remember in what year Tom was co-opted in the Supreme Council and at whose motion?...Can you remember in what year you became a member of the Supreme Council and whom did you succeed?...How, when and where did you first meet Tom? Had you information from Devoy or the Clan that he was coming to Dublin?'[284] These two elderly men are still consumed by the revolution, and worried that they are beginning to forget; to them it is immensely important that these details are remembered and recorded, or perhaps they themselves would be forgotten. They are concerned that history should be accurate. A 1957 letter from O'Shannon to McCullough, about a planned broadcast on the signatories of the Proclamation, lists those who are being approached for interview, and adds, 'Between yourself and myself – but I may be wrong – I fancy Mrs Tom Clarke might not be agreeable to help, although if she did her contribution would be very valuable'. It would seem that Clarke could be approached only very carefully, if at all, whatever Ormsby asserted.[285]

Éamon Dore, a Volunteer who acted as MacDiarmada's aide-de-camp in the Easter Rising, and married Clarke's sister Nora in 1918, made a life's work of remembering. Some of the Dore Archive is in the Glucksman Library, University of Limerick, but I have been granted access to a large part of it which is still in private hands.[286] Dore made himself available to historians and others seeking details of past events, and was prominent on committees in relation to plaques, memorials and commemorations, particularly the committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Easter Rising. His archive contains correspondence from scholars such as Desmond Williams, Dudley Edwards, Oliver Snoddy and in particular the Rev. F.X. Martin, who studied the Easter Rising closely. Martin pulls Dore up on expressing prejudice: 'The fact that MacNeill, Hobson, etc. “failed” at the crucial moment

283 *Irish Times*, 25 May 1967, p. 14.
284 U.C.D.A., McCullough papers P120/15 (3), 25 March 1953.
285 U.C.D.A., McCullough papers P120/15 (2), 18 March 1957.
286 My grateful thanks are due to my cousin Ríonach de h-Óir, who has given me permission to use this archive.

is of no relevance in a question on the “origins of 1916”. You judge a man's culpability not on his future, but on the factors at the time of his decision and action. Don't read history backwards! A historian is a fair, not a hanging, judge'.[287] Dore sent this letter on to Leslie Bean de Barra (Mrs Tom Barry), with a brief note: 'I must have another round with the Rev.'

P.S. O'Hegarty's witness statement is scathing about contemporaries who argue endlessly about the past. 'One of the difficulties about establishing the truth...is that people will persist in thinking that they approached public affairs in 1916 with the high patriotic enthusiasm and patriotism and determination they developed afterwards, and some people who might be supposed to know are subject to delusions. Mrs Clarke, for instance, wrote a letter to the *Sunday Independent*, apropos of a reference of mine, to say that MacDermott was specially authorised by the Supreme Council to call on me...and disclose what they were doing. Diarmuid Lynch, who was a member of the Council till 1916, wrote to me to say that Mrs Clarke was in error...'[288] Time and again in the 1950s and 1960s Clarke plunged into argument and dissension, finding fault with interviews, letters and articles which did not tell the story her way. Her memories were fixed, immutable.

The ‘golden generation’

The Civil War was a devastating experience for the 'golden generation' which felt that they had set a brand-new nation on an upward path, and instead saw their collective comradeship disintegrate into factionalism. As O'Hegarty wrote, 'it was realised that 'our deep-rooted belief that there was something in us finer than, more spiritual than, anything in any other people, was sheer illusion, and that we were really an uncivilised people with savage instincts, and the shock of that plunge from the heights to the depths staggered the whole nation'.[289] Many of the fighters who took part in the War of Independence and the Civil War had been just too young to be part of the Easter Rising. Joining the I.R.A. after the Truce, they were referred to disparagingly as 'Trucileers', but in the long run they succeeded as combatants; they had something to prove.

An interesting point is made by English: 'The formative period for the 1914-23 Republican elite was the 1890-1914 period; young men in early twentieth century Ireland tended to be in a position of subordination to key authority figures (fathers, priests, employers) and one crucial aspect of the

287 Letter, Martin to Dore, Dore Archive, 17 January 1963.
288 B.M.H. WS 0841, p. 5.
289 P.S. O'Hegarty, quoted in D. Ferriter, 'The political legacy: An insider on the outside' in C. Mulvagh & E. Purcell, *Eoin MacNeill, the pen and the sword* (Cork, 2022), p. 283.

revolutionary years was inter-generational tension...'[290] This growing push for freedom from authority was even more true for young women, pulling away from a stifling definition of 'women's place'. The women joining Cumann na mBan were certainly entering a military structure, with its own authority and rules, but to join it was a slap in the face of parental authority. They smoked, danced, flirted and stayed out late, while also, of course, training and drilling and learning first aid and how to shoot. They must have felt they were 'living' for the first time. Cumann na mBan certainly provided an outlet for Clarke's sisters, living with John Daly, who had developed quite an authoritarian position after many years of fighting authority himself. It must have been exhilarating to participate in activities among other groups of lively young women, with full permission, for the sake of Ireland.

Dolan has written, in relation to how wars are remembered, 'The dead can be crafted, moulded, turned to many ends; the veterans survive in all their awkward glory, demanding to be listened to or left alone, to be rewarded and recompensed, to defy what we want to assume they stood for, and accuse all who reneged on the cause once fought for'.[291] And here we come to Kathleen Clarke, writing *Revolutionary woman*. Public memory for many years treated the revolutionary leaders and other participants as heroes, something other than ordinary humans. This public memory elevated, for example, the charismatic Pearse and Connolly above less prominent leaders such as Tom Clarke, a source of considerable hurt and annoyance to Kathleen in later years, and a prime reason for writing her memoir – to set the record straight.

Revolutionary woman as a study in memoir

Revolutionary woman deals with one woman's life, but in it we can follow such themes as the role of women during the earlier twentieth century in Ireland, lauded when they are most useful, then sidelined when they begin to be seen as a distracting nuisance. There is also Ireland's gradual development from a colonised island, to an independent Free State, and ultimately a Republic, even if an incomplete one. Costello has written, 'The tragedy of many lives is that those who live them out do not realise they are living history. History somehow seems something with dignity, with triumph and failure clear-cut, but often in war lives lack dignity, and failure and triumph become matters of squalid murders in back streets and country lanes'.[292] In Clarke's memoir, one can see that she knew pretty well from the start that she was living what would become Ireland's history, and was intent to make it

290 R. English, *Ernie O'Malley, I.R.A. intellectual* (Oxford, 1998), p. 113.
291 A. Dolan, ''Divisions and divisions and divisions: who to commemorate?', in J. Horne & E. Madigan (eds.), *Towards commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution, 1912-1923* (Dublin, 2013), p. 150.
292 P. Costello, The heart grown brutal: The Irish revolution in literature from Parnell to the death of Yeats, 1891-1939 (Dublin, 1977), p. 207.

sound deliberate, clean, a masterpiece of progression towards the light. This meant overlooking some events, downplaying others, reducing the extent of anger, dismay and disillusion felt over the years, maybe even in her relationship with Tom.

My study is informed by my own experience of psychotherapy over many years. I have learnt how we create memories, for various reasons, and sometimes have to learn how to dismantle inaccurate memories. I cannot deny my own participation in this memoir, causing it to be published, preparing it for publication, and engaging in discussion about it when required. For a family member, there are bound to be difficult moments, but as Aiken says, this should not be denied: 'Any leakage of feeling into research often still seems to be a source of shame, a transgression of the ideal type researcher'.[293] I have found being a family member tempting me to soften an anecdote slightly, or shine a better light on the protagonist; I hope I have successfully avoided this. For generations, historians and researchers were largely male, and a certain template was laid down for the 'perfect' research, reasoned and emotionless. Women's recollections could be discounted as being more emotional than fact-based. As more women join the memoirists and researchers, that tide may now be turning.

The book consists of a lot of set-pieces, but Clarke's life was so dramatic that this is unavoidable. There is her Fenian Uncle John's release from twelve years of imprisonment and his triumphant return to Limerick; the subsequent meeting of Kathleen with John's prison comrade, Tom Clarke; their courtship and subsequent marriage in New York in 1901; their unsuccessful foray into market gardening; their return to Ireland and the opening of tobacconists' shops in Dublin. The Easter Rising is of course the centrepiece of the book, followed by the executions, the establishment of the I.N.A.&V.D.F., and Clarke's imprisonment in 1918. Clarke gives surprisingly little space to the War of Independence and the Civil War; she never mentions, for example, Croke Park's Bloody Sunday, and Collins's death gets a very cursory mention. These were difficult and painful times, and she probably preferred to skate over them. She details the founding of Fianna Fáil, but is brisk about her time as Lord Mayor of Dublin.

In between the major events, there are glimpses of family life and activities – not a lot, because she was writing for posterity, and was afraid, I think, of seeming sentimental. McDiarmid has studied how women, as opposed to men, write memoirs, and she illustrates this through several versions of Mary Spring Rice's account of the gun-running voyage of the *Asgard*.[294] As the account is rewritten by Spring Rice, more intimate or uncomfortable details are gradually removed, leading to a deracinated, factual account for publication. Women such as Clarke, fighting for position in a man's world, were

293 Aiken, *Spiritual wounds*, p. 237.
294 L. McDiarmid, At home in the revolution, what women said and did in 1916 (Dublin, 2015), pp. 43-61.

concerned not to be seen as 'emotional' or overly 'womanly'. They knew themselves to be as committed to The Cause as any man, and were determined not to be patronised.

If Clarke was writing this memoir in 2023, there is no doubt that she would be pressured by her publisher to 'sex it up', to give us more of the agony and the passion. We expect blood and guts on the page now, and emotions laid bare. But as well as wanting to be taken seriously in a man's world, Clarke was of a generation and class that maintained a decent privacy about personal matters. If that was a condition of publication, she would probably not have written a memoir at all.

Clarke's reasons for writing

Revolutionary woman could be used as a tool to illustrate the effects of wartime trauma and emotional repression, as it deals with a life which was replete with both. But Clarke constructed or refashioned certain memories, and turned away from others which were too difficult to face, clothing them in matter-of-fact statements. Denial, when we pretend things did not, in fact, happen as people tell us, or at all, is a very powerful defence mechanism. So why did Clarke begin to write, knowing that she would need to revisit terrible memories?

Clarke wrote in the first place in order to reclaim her husband's place in the revolutionary canon. She felt, not without reason, that he was continually overlooked in studies of the Easter Rising and its planning, overshadowed by the more charismatic Pearse, Connolly and Plunkett. Indeed, she herself is still commonly overlooked in lists of notable women of the Irish revolution, although she worked much harder to leave a legacy.

She also wished to recover the role played by her own family, the Dalys of Limerick. Commandant Edward Daly, although he commanded the Four Courts, a major 1916 garrison, and was executed on the second day in recognition of his status as one of the primary leaders, is now one of the 'Forgotten Seven' or 'Seachtar Dearmadta', as an RTÉ series described them – the executed men who had not been signatories of the Proclamation.[295] The Daly family, especially John, had been very important in the planning of the Rising, not least as the conduit of funds from Clan na Gael in New York, but had since fallen out of public memory.

Clarke is intent on stressing the heroism of her husband and his comrades, lighting a torch in Ireland's darkness and leading the way forward through their noble self-sacrifice. She is matter-of-fact in her accounts of her own experiences, however traumatic, but emotion flares out occasionally in interviews

295 Abú Media, 'Seachtar Dearmadta', transmitted on RTÉ in 2013.

she gave in later life. Emotional memory can come through more clearly in oral recollections, when first thoughts can burst through.

Clarke gave many interviews over her lifetime, but they were not all recorded. She was, of course, interviewed several times by emissaries from the Bureau of Military History, between 1947 and 1951, but ultimately she did not give permission for these interviews to be used. She was interviewed in 1966 for a series of programmes on the Easter Rising, 'On behalf of the Provisional Government', transmitted by RTÉ, and I was able to view this material in the RTÉ Archives. It was recorded for the episode on Tom Clarke. She described Tom himself and how they met, and spoke about his strong and honest character, 'straight as a die'. She recalls episodes which are not in the memoir, such as her younger sister Nora deciding Tom smoked too much and hiding his pipe, to much hilarity; 'when you're young, everything is funny'. He said to her that if they won, he would retire to 'a small cottage with a big wall around it, and a flower garden'.

English cautions that 'O'Malley's record of the flavour, drama and passion of the Revolution is important, as are his powerful exposition of the Republican argument and his evocation of Republican sentiment. This should not blind us to those places in the works where misrepresentation occurs...' [296] This point can also be made about Clarke's memoir; some events need to be analysed quite carefully.

Clarke also wrote from a sense of duty unfulfilled. She saw or perceived inaccurate representations of the events she had lived through, but hers would be the *true* story, unaffected by political considerations. Of course, that could not really be the case. She may have begun writing in the late 1930s, when study of the Seanad debates indicates that she was being seen by younger members as an outdated figure, refighting old battles. Her tenacity had become obstinacy, a refusal to adapt to change. She was afraid that all she had fought for would be forgotten.

Clarke made attempts to have the memoir published during her lifetime, but was warned off because of the risk of libel. Actually, there is little that could be construed as strictly libellous, but perhaps she watered some things down after advice. However, my opinion is that she refused to change anything, and instead decided that it should be published after her death, when no-one could argue with her.

Anger and isolation

Revolutionary woman contains a lot of anger. Anger against the British is to be expected, but there is also a sad anger at the tactics and manoeuvres of her own side. She is very aware of the gradual

296 English, *Ernie O'Malley*, p. 152.

sidelining of women in public or political life, and does her best to fight it. In February 1920, when a group of de Valera acolytes were angry with her for criticising his call for a 'Cuban solution', she says, 'It made me sad. I had worked and suffered for my country at least as much as de Valera or any man alive, and thought I had as much right to have an opinion and to air it as de Valera or any other man on things which affected my country'.[297] When no women were chosen for the Treaty delegation, she complained that 'It was suggested...that there should be one woman selected, and Griffith and de Valera promised to consider it, but did not act upon it. This seemed strange to me, knowing that only for the work done by the women after the Rising, they and their comrades might still be in prison'.[298] Rebuffed by Mellows and Traynor in the Four Courts at the start of the Civil War, when she tried to give them advice, she was again frustrated: 'They...adopted an air as if it was no business of mine. This irritated me; I felt everything concerning Ireland was as much my business as theirs'.[299].

She writes: '...as time went on I began to feel the weight of Party influence moving against me...I gathered I was considered more or less of a danger, something to beware of. Perhaps I was, to Party interests; country came before Party. To me a thing was right or wrong no matter who sponsored it, and on that I acted. Many mean or underhand things were done to me; they are not worth recording'.[300] This is an example, of which there are several in the memoir, where she hints at things, and leaves the reader to draw the conclusion. For example, a statement in *Revolutionary woman* emphasises her determination not to be 'untrue to the lessons learned from parents, uncle, aunt and grandmother, to be true to Ireland...no matter what the cost', and her concern that she might succumb to 'the desire, when one has reached place and position of power and consequence, to hold it at any cost, as I have seen colleagues whom I thought were incorruptible do'.[301] Since it was in reality highly unlikely that she would ever reach any position of power and influence in Fianna Fáil, these words would seem to be aimed elsewhere. Who was she talking about?

She was inclined to hint at what she considered de Valera's duplicity, while not spelling it out. When plenipotentiaries were being chosen for the Treaty talks, she apparently overheard de Valera saying to Griffith, 'You know, Griffith, we must have scapegoats'. She writes, 'Did he mean that he had no hope for a settlement and that the people, being disappointed in their hopes for peace, would blame the plenipotentiaries for the failure? In that sense, those selected would be scapegoats. I thought of many

297 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 253-4.
298 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 255.
299 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 270.
300 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 300.
301 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 311.

explanations but none satisfied me...At the time I was afraid to mention it to anyone, lest I start trouble'.[302]

Again, when tortured discussions were in train for what became the 'Pact Election', Harry Boland and de Valera held a private conversation. Returning to the group, which contained Clarke, 'Harry was very positive that de Valera had told him we could agree to give the majority of seven [candidates] asked for'. This was voted down at a subsequent meeting. When Boland maintained de Valera's agreement to the plan, 'This de Valera hotly denied, and said Harry had misunderstood him'. When Clarke returned to the room they had left, 'I heard Harry and de Valera shouting at each other...I heard Harry say, “It's all right, Chief, you let me down, but I won't give you away”...All the way home my mind raced over what I had heard...I recalled that the plenipotentiaries had claimed that de Valera had known the terms of the proposed Treaty, and was in agreement with them. I thought at the time that it was a misapprehension on their part, but what if something had happened to them like what had happened to Harry Boland? I was in a sea of doubt and uncertainty'.[303]

But there is not much uncertainty here; she is intent on damning de Valera without actually coming right out and saying it. The reader is left to consider the implications of these overheard conversations.

Recollection and reality

Clarke's pension application

It is interesting to compare *Revolutionary woman* with the ten-page statement Clarke produced with her application for a Military Service Pension in 1950. She already had a pension as widow of a Signatory, but could apply for an additional pension under the 1934 Act on the grounds of activities she had engaged in over the revolutionary period. Her file in the Department of Defence includes a letter from then President Seán T. O'Kelly, testifying that he carried despatches to her in Easter Week. Interestingly, a corroborative letter from Mrs Rogers, i.e. Sorcha McMahon, with whom she had worked so closely in the I.V.D.F., is brief and fairly cool: 'I was in constant touch with Mrs. Tom Clarke in connection with National Work...' McMahon confirmed that as a dispatch rider she travelled between the G.P.O. and Clarke's home in Richmond Avenue during Easter Week, and concludes, 'Her work in the organisations of the Volunteer Dependants Fund and the National Aid as well as in re-

302 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 256.
303 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 266-7.

organising the political and military life of the country in the post Insurrection period are too well known to call for repetition here'.[304]

Clarke may have hoped for something more from such an old friend, but perhaps her argumentative personality, and an apparent gradual loss of friendships, are at issue here. For someone of her standing in the movement, two letters are not much to offer, even if one of them is from the President of Ireland. Did she approach others, only to be rebuffed, or did she play safe, protecting herself from disappointment? She knew she could rely on McMahon and O'Kelly to support her application, but receiving dispatches while remaining at home is not much to ask people to attest to, considering her long revolutionary history. But of course her story did stand on its own recognizance, and perhaps she felt that two references would be sufficient.

Clarke's assertion in this statement that she 'started the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan, the first branch started in Ireland' is not strictly accurate. She and Mrs Éamonn Ceannt started this branch together after a foundation meeting which was held in Wynn's Hotel in April 1914, under the chairmanship of Agnes O'Farrelly; other branches were started around the same time. Her account of her activities leading up to and during Easter Week is very much as it is described in the published memoir. As this was an official statement, she reduces any emotional components. For example, she describes the Easter Saturday night meeting held by MacDiarmada and others after the news of Casement's arrest, but does not reveal how angry and upset she was that Tom had not been told of that meeting. She lists the days of Easter Week 1916, awaiting messages from the G.P.O. which never came, and deals calmly with her own arrest, and the farewell to Tom. 'After midnight I was taken with an armed military escort to Kilmainham Jail to say good bye to my husband. I was taken back to Dublin Castle and later in the morning released.' The following day, 'a military lorry arrived accompanied by a Dublin Metropolitan Policeman to take me to say goodbye to my brother in Kilmainham, also sentenced to death. At my request the officer agreed to take my sisters [Madge and Laura] too'.

She goes into detail about the establishment of the V.D.F. and its amalgamation with the I.N.A. She was 'instrumental in having Michael Collins appointed Secretary'; this is rather more circumspect than her statement in *Revolutionary woman* (see below). She states that she 'started the North City Courts', which is probably an exaggeration, although she certainly acted as a judge in those courts. She ends, 'From the Rising to the Treaty I gave every moment of every day of the year to the work for freedom without financial reward of any kind'. Given her public profile and her long association with one of

304 Department of Defence, REF D 2421 (B.M.H.).

Irish history's most iconic events and its leadership, it would surely have been controversial to deny her right to a Military Service Pension, even if she had not actually carried a gun.

Clarke and Collins

When a secretary for the I.N.A.&V.D.F. was sought in 1917, Clarke writes: 'Michael Collins and another ex-political prisoner applied for the position of Secretary, and Collins called to ask me to support him...After talking to him for a while, I decided he was just the man I had been hoping for. He was I.R.B. and Irish Volunteer, and also reminded me in many ways of Seán MacDermott. He also agreed with my idea that the fight for freedom must be continued, the Rising to count as the first blow. As Secretary to the N.A.V.D.F., he would be free to move about the country without molestation...With his forceful personality, his wonderful magnetism and his organising ability, he had little trouble in becoming a leader'.[305]

Collins may have reminded her of Tom, although she never says so; here was someone else who organised quietly and efficiently, and could keep a low profile when needed. She was deeply concerned that the momentum of the movement for which her husband had given his life would be lost. She could see that Collins would do all required of him and more; she wrote (much later) to Devoy that 'Collins is the best man we have to my mind'.[306]

The story Clarke tells in the memoir gives herself a good deal of credit in the choice of Collins as Secretary, and she may well have come to believe that her approval was decisive in his success, but further research reveals a more layered sequence of events. The position was an elected one, and the committee, mostly composed of female relatives of the executed leaders, were not impressed by Collins initially, irritated by his casual manners. However, he had the support of the men who had been interned with him in Frongoch. As Dolan and Murphy put it, 'That he got the job was not an accident: he had lobbied his I.R.B. contacts and, in turn, they had swayed their contacts on the I.N.A.&V.D.F. committee'.[307] He clearly targeted Clarke in particular, recognising her influence and status on the committee.

Researching this story provides insight into how Clarke deals with certain memories. She did not lie about the procedure of Collins's employment, but shaped it so that she had a more prominent part to play than had actually been the fact. Over the years, she would have told the story often, and it settled

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305 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 177.
306 N.L.I., Devoy papers MS 18,000/12/2, 10 July 1921.
307 A. Dolan & W. Murphy, *Michael Collins, the man and the revolution* (Cork, 2018), p. 53.

into a particular shape with her in the centre, but the actual event was more complicated. This gets to the heart of memoir as an historical record; everyone has an agenda, whether they are aware of it or not. Collins had become an iconic figure after his death, and even though they had disagreed on the Treaty, Clarke is still concerned to demonstrate her excellent judgement, and to give him the importance he had earned. By the time the memoir was written, Collins's star may have dimmed somewhat as compared with de Valera, but he still loomed large in the national story. In 1937, Frank O'Connor had been strongly criticised for publishing a 'warts and all' biography of Collins; Ireland was not ready for that.[308]

Clarke and MacDiarmada

Clarke, significantly, also compared Collins with Seán MacDiarmada, who became very close to the Daly family in Limerick, and particularly to Tom and Kathleen. It has been surmised by Feeney that Clarke's feelings for MacDiarmada were warmer than she could express in a memoir: 'Uniquely of all the men [mentioned in the memoir] she reserved a description of physical attractions for MacDiarmada alone. She recalls MacDiarmada's "big beautiful eyes" and describes him as "a very lovable character, kindly, sweet-tempered, full of fun and laughter"...It seems that there were two men in Kathleen Clarke's life, even if she did not admit the fact to herself'. He quotes Kathleen's post-Rising dream, during her illness, when both Tom and Seán speak to her: 'the two men really were inseparable in her mind'.[309] He is sceptical about Clarke's account of MacDiarmada speaking emotionally to her, saying he had never felt a mother's love (although he was nine when his mother died), and that Kathleen filled that picture for him. 'As always, these verbatim accounts from Kathleen Clarke, written decades after the event, have to be taken with a pinch of salt.'[310]

MacDiarmada was, of course, only five years younger than Clarke, much nearer her age than Tom was. When she went to visit the former in prison in 1915, the Arbour Hill officer hinted strongly that she had a romantic reason for visiting, so it obviously looked like a possibility.[311] However, it is highly unlikely that anything approaching even a flirtation would have existed between them. Apart from the fact that spies lurked everywhere, and damaging speculation could be leaked, MacDiarmada was very single-minded about his revolutionary ambitions, and even his letters to Min Ryan, who is accepted to have been his fiancée, talk about work rather than anything more sentimental. Besides, this was a generation which prided itself on being of stern moral principles, as opposed to the louche

308 F. O'Connor, *The big fellow* (Dublin, 1937).
309 B. Feeney, *Sixteen lives: Seán MacDiarmada* (Dublin, 2014), pp. 104-5.
310 Feeney, *Seán MacDiarmada*, p. 216.
311 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 77-8.

morality of the British exposed in the scandalous tabloids which were later banned in the Irish Free State. But Clarke obviously did think warmly of MacDiarmada, even forgiving him when he snapped at her after she expressed reservations about the Limerick battalion, 'For Christ's sake shut up, you are always croaking!' 'It was the first time in our acquaintance Seán had spoken to me in that way, but I understood the strain he was under.'[312]

A small bit of evidence here is the pencilled note, written on a scrap torn out of a notebook, which Clarke received a few weeks after the Rising. A final message from Tom is on one side, and MacDiarmada wrote a few words on the other. He begins his message, 'Dear Cáit', and she comments on this: 'I could imagine Seán's grin of mischief when he wrote “Dear Cáit”, as he had never dared to address me as other than “Mrs Clarke” in all our years of friendship and comradeship'.[313] It is telling evidence of a strong spirit that such a mischievous liberty could be taken by a man awaiting his execution.

The memoir takes pains to emphasise that Tom was the senior partner, and directed MacDiarmada: 'He did all his organizing under Tom's guidance; Tom being older and more experienced, he trusted him completely'.[314] It was important for Kathleen to believe this, but doubt is cast on this reading of the relationship by later commentators, particularly those who knew both men. Foy points out that 'one was suspicious and introverted, the other sparkling and loquacious. Yet they complemented each other perfectly...' and describes their collaboration as 'the most important political relationship of their lives'.[315] But he also asserts that MacDiarmada cold-bloodedly used Tom's status, and Kathleen's association with John Daly, to rise in the movement himself. 'His charm concealed the icy calculation and nose for power of an intensely ambitious man...This meant deliberately cultivating Clarke, manipulating this master of manipulation while simultaneously climbing over everyone who stood in the way.' Of Kathleen, Foy says, 'Adoring his company...she helped him win over her husband'.[316]

Clarke and MacNeill

In *Revolutionary woman*, Clarke states that she could not recall whether Tom had told her MacNeill had signed the proclamation, or agreed to sign, but she insisted that if he had agreed to do so, that was as good as signing to an honourable man. However, in Le Roux's biography of Tom Clarke which had been closely overseen by Clarke and her sister Madge, she states clearly that Tom *did* tell her that

312 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 104.
313 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p 164.
314 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 55.
315 M.T. Foy, Tom Clarke, the true leader of the Easter Rising (Dublin, 2014), p. 99.
316 Foy, *Tom Clarke*, p. 111. For more on Tom Clarke and MacDiarmada, see p. 166, below.

MacNeill had signed the proclamation. That biography contains some very cutting comments about MacNeill: '...the man who runs away when his troops are ready under the plea that “he does not see a reasonable chance of success” is not much of a practical soldier...'[317] Such comments, by the way, are not found in Le Roux's earlier biography of Patrick Pearse; it is clear some pressure was exerted by the sisters to give a particular picture of MacNeill.

MacNeill himself was of course very annoyed by this publication, and wrote to Le Roux to complain. He says that one sentence in particular 'altogether misrepresents the truth' and protests that Le Roux might have been expected to engage a ‘“mutual friend” in advance of supplying a series of statements concerning my attitude and action in a great national crisis...do you recognise any obligation in the interest of truth to enquire upon what kind of evidence these statements of what took place between me and others who are now dead are based and ought to be based?'[318] In any event, de Valera was not convinced by Clarke's assertions, and continued to support MacNeill.

Clarke's political controversies

Tom Clarke as President

While Clarke's memoir was still unpublished, she engendered numerous controversies with old friends and enemies by her assertions about past events, notably those concerning her husband Tom. She never, for example, accepted that Pearse was named President of the Republic which was declared in the G.P.O., insisting that Tom being the first signatory of the Proclamation automatically made him the first President. The first (and only) edition of *Irish War News*, the publication issued from the G.P.O. during that week, is absolutely clear that Pearse was elected President. The document lists the members of the Provisional Government, in the order in which they signed the Proclamation, and describes the taking of the G.P.O. The final paragraph states, 'Commandant General P. H. Pearse is commanding in chief of the Army of the Republic and is President of the Provisional Government'.

The announcement of the Republic is in the passive voice – 'The Irish Republic has been declared' and 'a Provisional Government has been appointed' – but clearly these declarations and appointments were made by the inner council of I.R.B. members without the participation of the rank and file, who need not necessarily have been made aware of this elevation of Pearse, and probably wouldn't have read *War News* anyway. The I.R.B. was always secretive about these things. It is quite difficult to believe

317 L. Le Roux, Tom Clarke and the Irish freedom movement (Dublin, 1936), p.199.
318 C. Mulvagh & E. Purcell, *Eoin MacNeill, the pen and the sword* (Cork, 2022) p. 266.

that Pearse would unilaterally take the title; he must have been given the authority to style himself President. But the years made no difference to Clarke's passion on the matter.

Writing to Padraic Ó Maidín in 1961 about her memoir, Clarke says 'There are men now alive who know for a certainty that Tom was President, but who refrain from saying so lest it might in a sense besmirch Pearse...Tom *said nothing to me* [my italics] about the Presidency when I was with him in Kilmainham Jail...I feel sure he would have mentioned it [any change], as he knew I might blaze about it, he would want to head me off doing so. And I asked all the men...on return from prison if they knew of any change during the week, all knew he went into the G.P.O. as President. I do feel very strongly that if Pearse did really sign himself President, it was a dastardly act to a comrade in arms'.[319]

Her account of the prisoner releases in 1917[320] was corroborated for me in a letter from her son Emmet. 'My mother, Daly, Tom and I on the morning of the general release in 1917 went to Westland Row station to meet the prisoners coming off the Mail train. Just as the barrier was raised Seán McGarry was one of the first out, rushed forward to my mother flinging his arms around her and his first words were, “Who the hell made Paddy Pearse President?” To which my mother replied, “I had been waiting for you to come out to tell me if any change had occurred”. McGarry replied, “There was no change”. Later after the Treaty he denied he had made the statement because he had supported the Treaty. But I was standing beside both of them and heard him [ask that]'.[321] All this proves is that McGarry believed it, as probably did many others, but it does not contradict the printed declaration in *War News*.

McCullough, in a 1960 letter to Ó Maidín, says, 'It is unfortunate that Mrs Clarke seems to have permitted Le Roux to give the impression that Tom was not getting all the honour and credit that was due to him. Because Pearse was a speaker and a writer, it is perhaps true that Pearse's name has been more used in public references, but when all the writing is finished, Tom's name will come out in its true perspective'. He continues: 'Both Pearse and Tom Clarke were dedicated men and the world can be assured that no question of jealousy or self-seeking of priority could have arisen between them'.[322] Certainly Tom's apparent modesty and sincerity argue against any wish to aggrandize himself, and I could believe that if he were offered the post in the G.P.O. he would demur, and put someone else forward. I can equally believe that Tom would have shied away in their final interview from discussing this matter with Kathleen.

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319 N.L.I., Patrick Madden papers MS 31696, Clarke to Ó Maidín, 5 June 1961.
320 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 187-8.
321 Letter, Emmet Clarke to Helen Litton, 3 May 1990.
322 N.L.I., McCullough papers P120/23 (20), 23 May 1960.

A convoluted conspiracy theory appears in a letter from Ó Maidín to McCullough, repeating a statement made by D. Lynch that "'Denis McCullough was elected President (which, be it noted) meant President of the Irish Republic virtually established by the I.R.B." The thought that will occur to a person working on this published statement is: "Why did not Denis McCullough become President of the Republic proclaimed on Easter Monday?" The *logical* answer is that Clarke and MacDiarmada (the majority of the Supreme Council) ousted him from his rightful position. A concurrent thought will probably (no, certainly) be that (on the basis of Mrs Clarke's statement) Clarke was successful in getting himself elected President but that Pearse was too strong for him and succeeded in getting Clarke dethroned. Ludicrous as it all appears, that will be history when the cold *scientific* historians come to deal with it. The I.R.B. Executive will be shown as composed of men in a mad scramble for power throwing the unfortunate Irish people into a lunatic armed revolt...'

It is an interesting assumption that history ought to be personal and emotional, rather than based on scientific research. At all events McCullough's response is very definite: 'I was not made President of the Republic because I was not in Dublin and was not in the Rising'.[323]

Tom Clarke in the G.P.O.

During the 1960s, General Richard Mulcahy interviewed a number of participants in the Easter Rising. Interviewed by him in 1963, Clarke was still protesting that Tom had been elected President. 'She described that on Easter Monday 1916 when they came to the side door of the G.P.O. Tom Clarke was given the privilege of pulling back the bolt or opening the door into the G.P.O. as a sign that he was their president; and it was he gave the first orders inside the side door of the G.P.O. to get the officials to put up their hands and to move out of the post office. She recalls that it was Tom Clarke gave a copy of the Proclamation to Pearse to go and read from the G.P.O. steps saying that Pearse would be the person who would better proclaim the Proclamation, as it were, that that was not a strong point with Tom'.[324]

By this stage, the story has got rather ridiculous. No other account, contemporary or otherwise, supports any of it. Her memoir gives this account more or less as she told Mulcahy, though without the detail of Tom handing the Proclamation to Pearse. It is hard to believe that Tom made all this up to flatter himself or comfort her, but equally no one can contradict her description of their last interview. This is the story she wants or needs to tell, and other people's recollections are not allowed to get in the way. She insists, for example, that Tom told her that he had been first into the G.P.O., and also that

323 N.L.I., McCullough papers P120/23 (17), P120/23 (20).
324 U.C.D.A., Mulcahy papers P7c/181.

he had been last out, having gone back to make sure that everyone else had left: 'He dashed across to Moore Lane, saying, “Come on, boys, charge for Ireland!” They all followed, and to their amazement arrived in Moore Lane alive'.[325]

Other witnesses of the events contradict these assertions, while not wishing to accuse either Tom or Kathleen of actually lying. In May 1938 an *Irish Press* correspondence took issue with Clarke on this matter. Winifred Carney wrote, responding to a letter from Clarke contradicting a letter from Desmond Ryan, 'I did not doubt Mrs Clarke's veracity, but...I did doubt very much her ability, in the stress of her final meeting with her husband...to note with the coolness, and I will say, accuracy, of a newspaper reporter such a small detail as to when he left the G.P.O....Mrs Clarke says that Mr W. Le Rouse [r. Roux] had other sources of information besides her family for his life of Tom Clarke. I will assume that Mr Le Rouse derived from one of these other sources the inaccurate statement...that Tom Clarke gave the command at the seizure of the G.P.O. He did not. The orders to halt and to charge were given by James Connolly, for I walked beside him to the attack, and next to Connolly walked Pearse.'

Ryan was equally trenchant in his reply to Clarke, while not wishing to take issue with her: '...I have always had, and have the deepest respect and admiration for her many activities in the national struggle, her courage and public spirit, and her devotion to the memory of Tom Clarke and his comrades'. He quotes several reports which contradict her account of Tom being the last to leave the G.P.O., and adds, '[I] only wrote as strongly as I wrote in my [original] letter to remind Mrs Clarke that wrangling over inessentials may increase the cynicism of the rising generation...'[326] Yet these 'inessentials' took possession of her during later years, and she spent a lot of time responding angrily to recollections which she did not agree with. Once she had asserted a position, she could not afford to walk it back.

Connolly 'Kidnap'

Another topic of contention between Clarke and others was the so-called 'kidnapping' of James Connolly in January 1916. Clarke insists that she did not believe that either Tom or MacDiarmada had anything to do with this episode,[327] but other accounts give the lie to that belief. Dore states merely, 'In January, 1916, I together with Frank Daly was sent to accompany Commandant Ned Daly, when it was decided by the Military Council to have a “heart to heart” talk with Connolly'.[328] However, in a

325 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 138.
326 ‘Evacuation of the G.P.O. in 1916’, *Irish Press*, 10 May 1938. p. 2.
327 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, pp. 88-9.
328 E. Dore, unpublished memoir, Dore Archive, p. 158.

handwritten, undated note (probably 1966), Dore (Clarke's brother-in-law) takes issue with some remarks by her in response to an interview he had given to RTÉ:

'I am surprised that Mrs Clarke was depending on a report, which was incorrect, for an account of what I said on [the] television programme. I did not say that James Connolly was arrested by her brother Edward Daly. I have repeatedly in press and otherwise contradicted the use of the words "arrest" or kidnapped in relation to the event...I said that Commandant Daly interviewed James Connolly and both left Liberty Hall for the house where the meeting was held at which James Connolly became a member of the Military Council...I confined myself to the facts that were within my own knowledge. The instruction was given by Seán MacDiarmada. I have no way of knowing how much information Commandant Daly was accustomed to give to his sister nor can he now tell us. I was certainly instructed by Seán MacDiarmada to meet Commandant Daly and follow his instructions. There is another man [not named] still alive who can vouch for this if he wishes to get embroiled in a controversy with Commandant Daly's sister'.

In another batch of handwritten notes, labelled 'Rough notes for Television Commentary on MacDermot done 13.1.66', Dore elaborated on this episode, which he says arose from Irish Citizen Army manoeuvres around Dublin Castle which had alarmed Clarke and MacDiarmada.

'Commandant Ned Daly...was ordered to bring Connolly to a meeting... Seán MacDiarmada gave orders to Frank Daly...and myself...to meet Ned Daly and carry out his orders. Connolly needed little persuasion from Ned Daly and was more than willing to meet Clarke and MacDiarmada – he was more apt to be friendly and had great confidence in both, with them than with anyone else. He went to the meeting – held as far as my geographical knowledge of Dublin [goes] in the area of Dolphin's Barn – there was a house in its own grounds near the end of the Tram line where the owner was very very friendly possibly a member of the I.R.B. After a heart to heart talk with them the Military Committee set up by the Supreme Council of the organization Connolly joined the I.R.B. And never was their [sic] a more loyal member of both bodies'.[329]

McCullough stated in 1950: 'I again assert that Connolly was never kidnapped either by the Supreme Council or on its advice and direction. Connolly definitely went into hiding in order to induce Madame Markievicz and Seamus Mallin to precipitate action on behalf of the Citizen Army...I was present at the meeting in Clontarf Town Hall, where Seán MacDiarmada arrived and told us in great agitation that Connolly had disappeared and that the other two were threatening to bring out the Citizen Army...I am satisfied from my intimate knowledge of both Seán MacDiarmada and Tom

329 All quotes from documents in Dore Archive.

Clarke, that Seán MacDiarmada was not acting a part and that he was sincere in his anxiety to have action by Madame Markievicz and Mallin stopped'.[330]

Ó Briain wrote to McCullough in 1953, 'Of course, you of the Supreme Council had nothing to do with this Connolly affair and obviously poor old Seán and co. thought it better not to worry you with information about it. Still was Seán acting when he came into our meeting, looking very perturbed, and talking of the bad news of Connolly's disappearance?...Could there be anything in P.S. O'Hegarty's statement that there were two disappearances...the other perhaps to test his own organisation of the I.C.A.?'[331]

Whatever the truth of this very confusing episode, it is clear that Kathleen either believed completely that neither Tom nor Seán was aware in advance of Connolly's 'disappearance', or that she was determined to tell the story in that way.

Commemorations of the Easter Rising

Michael Mallin's widow was the only relative of the executed leaders to accept an invitation to attend the commemorations in 1924. Concerns of security in the the Irish Free State meant that 'politically-inspired blacklisting remained in place' for the ninth anniversary, May 1925. Invitations were sent to 'each Deputy and Senator who is not Irregular'. For the tenth anniversary, the Department of Defence recommended that sixty seats nearest the altar were reserved for the Executive Council, relatives of executed leaders, the Ceann Comhairle, the Chief Justice, etc. The parade in Dublin on the twentieth anniversary, 1936, was attended by Fianna Fáil cumainn, 1916 veterans, emigrant groups, and members of Cumann na mBan.[332]

Newspaper accounts of the 1941 Silver Jubilee parade list those relatives who attended, but note that the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Kathleen Clarke, was absent from the platform, represented instead by Alderman T. Kelly. It is likely that this was due more to Clarke's fragile health than to any desire to boycott the event; by this stage, she participated in all such commemorations as far as possible.[333] For this Silver Jubilee the National Museum held a heritage exhibition of artefacts, guns, paintings, 'donated to the N.M. by participants in the events of the time, by their relatives and friends and by members of the general public, to whom we extend our gratitude'. The donors are not named, but the

330 U.C.D.A., McCullough papers MS P120/12, McCullough to O'Liatháin, 9 March 1950.
331 U.C.D.A., McCullough papers MS P120/16 (6), 25 May 1953.
332 C. McCarthy, Ireland's 1916 Rising: Explorations of history-making, commemoration and heritage in modern times (London, 2012), p. 141, p. 149.
333 McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising*, p. 162.

Howth rifle inscribed 'Tom Clarke to John Daly' must have come from the Daly family, along with Colbert's and MacDiarmada's final letters to the Daly family, and buttons and badges from Edward Daly's uniform. Clarke's certificate of U.S. citizenship, and a U.S. flag taken from his house, may have come from Kathleen Clarke.[334] An exhibition in University College Cork, on the literature of 1916, included original letters written by Kathleen Clarke and Denis McCullough.[335]

For the fiftieth anniversary in 1966 the National Museum, in collaboration with the National Library of Ireland, held another exhibition. This included a set of stamps with portraits of the Signatories, and a commemorative coin. This coin had deeply upset Clarke when it was proposed, because it depicted Pearse as President, with Cuchulainn on the reverse. In a memo to the Department of the Taoiseach, Owen Sheehy Skeffington suggested Tom Clarke instead of Cuchulainn, or perhaps just listing the names of the seven signatories, clearly in an attempt to avoid controversy, but that plan was rejected.[336] In a letter to Dore, Clarke raged: 'I have told Eamon Martin I will repudiate it, as Tom was made President by his comrades on the Military Council and S.S.I.R.B. as the Proclamation tells by him being first signatory.' She insists this time (changing the story again) that he *did* confirm his Presidency during their last interview in Kilmainham: 'Im [sic] very upset about it, it was the one small consolation I had'.[337]

Lemass politely declined Clarke's claim to a position on the government-appointed Fiftieth Anniversary Coiste Cuimhneacháin, 'conscious of the unabashed character of her republicanism', and Dore represented family interests on the committee.[338] A letter from Leslie Bean de Barra about an early committee meeting said, 'From the drift of Lemass's opening remarks, I gathered that unless the survivors make themselves felt, the whole thing will be in the hands of the army...I did say I thought the survivors should settle the plans and that the Army should fall in with them and also the Civil Servants, but there was no follow up from the Old I.R.A. to my remark'.[339]

The ninetieth anniversary of the Rising, in 2006, saw a major auction of memorabilia by Adam's/Mealy's auctioneers in Dublin. Dr Emmet Clarke's descendants, living in England, relieved

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334 Madge Daly mentions a Sinn Féin flag taken from the Daly home on 11 May 1916, which was being sold by the family of a Colonel Weldon (November 1942). Daly Clarke tried to retrieve it, with a written authorisation from Madge, but it was sold to a dealer: Madge Daly unpublished typescript memoir, U.L. Glucksman Library, P2/267, p.151.
335 McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising*, p. 144.
336 McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising*, p. 220.
337 Letter, Clarke to Dore, 3 May 1965, Dore Archive.
338 McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising*, p. 186.
339 Letter, de Barra to Dore, 23 July 1965. Interestingly, another set of these minutes in the archive, dated 23 July 1965, notes, 'Mr Frank Robbins, Phillis Bean Uí Ceallaigh and others would oppose the inclusion of O'Casey plays as part of any 1916 Commemoration programme'. Old hurts die hard!

themselves of their family history for ultimately a very large sum of money, despite public protests at this dispersal of important historical material.[340] The wooden chests presented to Tom and Kathleen with the Freedom of Limerick City were sold for 65,000 euro, far above the budget of Limerick City Council, which had wished to acquire them.[341]

'To the delight of many, some three hundred letters exchanged between Tom Clarke and his wife Kathleen from 1899 to 1915 were snapped up by the N.L.I. for 90,000 euro. However, Clarke's handwritten farewell note to his wife was bought by another buyer for 75,000 euro'.[342] I had been given this latter note by Kathleen's daughter-in-law Mary, widow of Daly, along with other memorabilia which Mary wanted to pass on to Emmet, the last surviving son—Daly had died in 1971, and Tom in 1988. I dutifully handed the note over to Emmet in 1991, with no suspicion that it would eventually be sold to the highest bidder. Fortunately, I had previously brought it into the National Museum to be photographed.

Bertie Ahern, speaking at a Fianna Fáil event called 'Reclaim the Spirit of 1916', preparing for the ninetieth anniversary, stated proudly, 'Many of those who fought in 1916 became the founding members of our party. We all know the names of de Valera and Markievicz. We are also the party of Patrick Pearse's mother and sister'.[343] So what about Tom Clarke's widow, who was so much more than just his widow, and who was important in the early history of Fianna Fáil? This was sixteen years after the publication of *Revolutionary woman*, which had been launched by Ahern himself, then Minister for Labour. Clarke's efforts to redeem her place in Fianna Fáil history seem to have been completely in vain.

340 A letter from Emmet Clarke indicates that this auction was not what he intended: 'When my mother died in 1972 the National Library approached me to know if they could have my mother's papers. I have not disposed of them yet...I have literally thousands of letters and many other papers which I feel should be deposited together where they are readily available to writers'. Letter, Clarke to O'Mahony, N.L.I., Seán O'Mahony papers MS 44,041, 14 February 1995.
341 'Clarke chests lost to city in bid war', *Limerick Chronicle*, 18 April 2006.
342 McCarthy, *Ireland's 1916 Rising*, p. 398.
343 *Irish Times*, 22 October 2005, p.1.

CHAPTER 5

PERSON AND PERSONALITY

Kathleen Clarke does not dwell on herself very much in this memoir, but a certain amount can be gleaned between the lines. Interesting aspects of her life are her consistently poor health, her relations with her children, and her own personality.

Clarke's health

Clarke belonged, as mentioned above, to a generation which did not discuss health matters in public, in particular what were discreetly called 'women's problems'. In her memoir she mentions her health as little as possible, and only then when a reason had to be given for some matter delayed or left undone. Her health was uncertain for almost all of her political life, and her death was expected more than once. Coming face to face with death must leave its mark, and she cannot have shut out that fear completely, but she makes little of it, and indeed a couple of times it is clear she might have welcomed an end to a sorrowful life.

Clarke mentions a 'serious illness' when she and Tom were living in New York, after her first son was born, but does not elaborate, and she only mentions it because of an argument they had when Tom had to go out, but was afraid to leave her alone.[344] It must have been very difficult to have her first child while so far away from her mother and family, but she does not dwell on that. Kathleen and Daly later spent some months in a convalescent home run by nuns, but the reason is unclear.[345] The memoir does not mention this episode at all. It is possible that Kathleen suffered a miscarriage; considering her youth when she married, three children in ten years is a low number, but again such matters were not for public discussion.

When Daly, aged three, recovered from diphtheria, she and he travelled to Limerick for convalescence. Her own health was also under strain, probably from weeks of nursing the child. Six months after returning to New York, she was again in poor health, and they moved to Long Island,

344 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 43.
345 N.L.I., Clarke papers MS 49, 352/3, letters dated 21 January 1904, 23 June 1904.

following medical advice. Here they ran a market gardening enterprise. Her health seemed to improve, as they lived a farming, open-air life which she obviously loved: 'I certainly would have been content to stay there for ever; I loved the land and growing things and the joy of being together all the time'.[346] It was not all plain sailing, and she has a vivid description of a wildfire which seemed to approach their house: 'I was sure we were all going to be burned – I still think of it with horror' – a rare admission of fear.[347] But his expectation of an upcoming war was too much for Tom, and in 1908 they moved back to Ireland. When her baby Tom was born soon afterwards, she was advised not to breastfeed him, which must have been related to her own health.[348]

The only times that the memoir deals with her health in any detail are first, when she suffered a miscarriage after the Easter Rising, and secondly when she was imprisoned in Holloway in 1918-19. She could not avoid mentioning the miscarriage, because she very nearly died, and was extremely ill for weeks. She also wished to make the point that she had not told Tom at their last meeting that she was pregnant, fearing to weaken him at a time when he needed to be strong. It is a part of her legend that she did not tell him, and she need not have told anyone that at all. It is as if she wished to demonstrate to others her own strength of will (which indeed is rarely in doubt). That illness also provided one of the vivid dreams she mentions in the memoir, seeing her dead loved ones, and her disgust at having been sent back to earth, as she put it.[349]

When dealing with her time in Holloway, Chapter Eight in the memoir, she could again hardly avoid discussing her health, as it was a constant drumbeat of worry among her family, friends and fellow-prisoners, and was the reason she finally had to appeal for early release.

In the initial stages, she could not eat the prison food, or sleep for not knowing what was happening with her children, and she lost nine pounds in weight during the first month. This concerned the prison authorities, as they feared the consequences of her death in prison, and she and her fellow-prisoners, Gonne MacBride and Markievicz, were soon moved to the hospital ward, with a great improvement in conditions. Still her health barely improved. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, who was imprisoned with them for some days in August 1918, described Clarke as 'in a very grave condition', and a published letter sent out by Gonne MacBride was equally alarmist, annoying Clarke because of the worry it would cause her family.

346 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p.45.
347 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p.48.
348 Personal comment, Emmet Clarke to Helen Litton.
349 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 161-2.

But her family knew well that she was not strong, and mounted a strong campaign to have her released on health grounds. On her arrival at Holloway, the Medical Officer stated that she was 'naturally not a very strong woman, but is maintaining her health and strength very well. She suffers from headaches at times...' Nevertheless, the family lost no time in harnessing the opinions of several doctors, all testifying that Clarke was in a poor state of health, and must not suffer stress of any kind.

Dr Dolan of Dublin explained that in June 1916 she had suffered from 'extreme antipartum haemorrhage', followed by a serious operation for 'interior trouble', and warned that without exercise and a nourishing diet, 'I consider her chances of recovery remote'. Dr Graham of Limerick attested that she was 'very anaemic and weak' after her serious interior operation, and Dr Roberts, also of Limerick, averred that after her last operation 'she will never be perfect in her health again'. The most pessimistic outlook, however, was expressed by her friend and regular physician, Dr Kathleen Lynn, who had known her for years. She wrote: 'Mrs Clarke...is an extremely frail, delicate woman, with chronic interior trouble, she is very anaemic and is utterly unfit to undergo any hardship whatsoever...I consider she would quickly succumb under the confinement and deprivation of prison life'.[350]

Markievicz's letters from Holloway mention Clarke's health a good deal; she was obviously quite worried about her. In October 1918 she writes to her sister Eva, 'Mrs C. is better again, thanks to a filthy bottle, a painted chest and being rolled in cotton wool for a week. One of the few times I've known a doctor to be of any use'.[351] She writes to Madge Daly on 11 November, '[Kathleen] has suffered a great deal since she has been here with internal trouble and bad back...This got better but unfortunately during that very cold weather before they lit the fires she was chilled to the bone and got very bad rheumatic pains, which centred in her chest...She is now singing little songs and I have to restrain her from dancing jig steps'.[352] But by Christmas, Markievicz is less sanguine: 'I don't think she'll be really well till she has her operation';[353] 'She is not sleeping now and is so feeble'.[354] It was an extremely cold winter, and Clarke was spending most of her time in bed.

Clarke, despite her determination not to seek any favours from the authorities, was eventually persuaded to ask for early release, when the prison doctor observed her suffering a heart attack. These attacks had become gradually more frequent and painful, and he insisted that her life would be in danger if she stayed in prison much longer. She contracted influenza on the way home from England,

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350 U.C.D.A., Art O'Brien papers P34 (20-22) for all quotes.
351 E. Roper (ed.), *Prison letters of Countess Markievicz* (London, 1934), p.186.
352 Madge Daly papers, U.L,. Glucksman Library P2/1/36/3.
353 Roper, *Prison letters*, p. 188.
354 Roper, *Prison letters*, p.190.

and was ill for many weeks, but she survived it, which many more obviously healthy people did not. Lynn's diary has several references to Clarke's health after her release:

'28 February 1919 ...Mrs Clarke took bad turn & nearly was gone this evg. I went at once & got Fr Albert & Mr Duggan.'

29 February : 'Mrs Clarke a little, wee bit better, got thro' night & day fairly, she is so tired.'

22 March: 'Mrs Clarke spitting blood but doesn't seem bad.'

26 March: 'Saw Mrs Clarke early, she is weakly still & no better for raid [on 24 March]'.[355]

In 1919, Clarke was forcibly escorted to hospital by Lynn and Madeleine ffrench-Mullen after being observed coughing up blood. She probably only mentions this in order to illustrate the ruthlessness of the D.M.P. in searching her house while she was lying seriously ill, with her chest covered with ice packs.[356] Following the death of Terence MacSwiney on hunger-strike on 25 October 1920, Madge Daly reports, 'I attended the Special High Mass in the Pro-Cathedral [Dublin] with Mrs Clarke; only people with special permits were allowed in, and the streets all around were thronged with people praying. Mrs Clarke got very ill during the mass, and I cannot forget how kind Michael Collins was. He gave a special permit for a taxi, and sent her home in the care of Dr Lynn. She was dangerously ill, and her life was despaired of for weeks'.[357]

Clarke describes another bout of influenza in 1926, and a vivid dream in which Tom encourages her to fight for the right to enter the Dáil; this was just before de Valera established Fianna Fáil, and moved to circumvent the Oath. The final mention of her health in *Revolutionary woman* is when she is Lord Mayor of Dublin, and suffered a long illness after an operation in March 1940. She continued in office, but retired in June 1941, citing her health as a reason. Again, the precise illness is not specified.

Despite all the pessimistic discussions about her health and life expectancy (which would probably have annoyed her very much), she died in 1972 at the age of 96, suffering from dementia.

355 R.C.P.I., Lynn diaries. I am very grateful to Dr Mary McAuliffe for sourcing these references.
356 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, pp. 225-6.
357 Madge Daly papers, unpublished memoir, U.L., Glucksman Library, P2/267/171.

Clarke and her children

McDiarmid points out how Clarke experienced her emotions through dreams, in which she has no agency. Until her dream of joining her lost loved ones after the executions, 'her emotions were paralysed at the time of those traumatic visits to Kilmainham; this loss was the definitive loss, a quadruple loss of husband, brother, friend and baby'. Clarke describes how she was unable to cry for weeks after the Rising, and it was in fact her miscarriage and the subsequent illness that precipitated this dream that she was dying. As McDiarmid surmises, her initial trauma had not been fully realized: '...she had not heard the shots, or seen her husband's or brother's dead bodies. She had not had the shock of direct confrontation with their deaths'.[358]

Clarke expresses her disappointment at having being 'sent back', so to speak, to carry on her work and support her children, who do not seem to have been her first consideration. Indeed, she admits that in her final interview with Tom before his execution, she burst out, 'I don't know how I am going to live without you. I wish the British would put a bullet in me too', and that it was Tom who reminded her what she had to live for: 'God will help you, and your own courage, also the children's need for you'.[359] This would not, perhaps, be an easy exchange for her sons to read.

On at least one occasion before the Rising, Clarke left her three sons alone at home, since she had no maid at the time. The youngest, Emmet, aged four, had a passion for fire and matches, and she was very nervous about leaving them, but she was responsible for the lecture for that evening and felt she could not miss it. They were safe when she got home, and she was very pleased with them, but it was a serious risk to take, though the eldest lad, Daly, aged twelve, could probably have controlled the situation. She describes this particular event as a one-off, but it obviously stayed in her mind as a nerve-racking event.[360] She probably did normally have a domestic servant to leave in charge if necessary; in those days even families of low incomes would have at least a maid of all work. Struggles between domestic responsibilities and public life are not new to women, either then or now, but it does not seem that Tom could give up his evening.[361]

Trauma is a process of remembering; events can come back to haunt you, even years after. This can be seen very clearly when listening to Emmet Clarke, the youngest son, who was interviewed by

358 L. McDiarmid, At home in the revolution, what women said and did in 1916 (Dublin, 2015), pp. 183-4.
359 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 138.
360 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 72.
361 Clarke's niece, Laura O'Sullivan, told me that Tom, in New York, often insisted that Daly was left alone, locked in, in the evenings, and that Kathleen was very unhappy about this.

Donncha Ó Dúlaing on the publication of his mother's memoir in 1991.[362] Emmet was in his early eighties but, recalling playing trains with his father on the floor, he was suddenly a six-year-old child again, and began to sob, something which he later said embarrassed him. Some memories never lose their power to affect one emotionally, particularly the loss of a parent at an early age, and in a traumatic fashion. All the 'honour and glory' attached to his father's heroic death meant very little compared with the loss his heart still felt.

After the Rising, the I.R.A. constantly needed more arms and ammunition, and to that end tried to collect as much gold as possible. Daly's Bakery in Limerick saved any gold sovereigns that came into the shop, and Clarke would collect it and bring the gold to Collins. On one occasion, travelling to Dublin with her children, she hid gold in her muff and in the bosom of her coat, under her furs. She had filled a taxi with plants and garden equipment, and this domestic camouflage, along with the presence of her sons, enabled them to get through a search. She was carrying about £2,000 worth of gold, and described it as a 'hair-raising experience'. She was risking herself, of course, but she was also risking her sons; they could all have been shot without mercy if a proper search had been made.

Her concern for her sons seems to have varied from time to time. As Tom Clarke's children, she always expressed fear they would be targeted, but she often put them in harm's way herself. Her relatively high public profile did nothing to protect them, but she would not veer from her path, and must have been frequently torn in her loyalties. Perhaps she sometimes wished to back away from public life for their sake, but that is nowhere expressed in the memoir.

When Clarke was arrested early in the morning in her home in May 1918, her conversation with her sons is rather shocking. 'While I was eating my breakfast I told the children that I was being arrested by the British who had murdered their father and uncle, and that I did not expect to be back with them until the end of the war'. There is little attempt here to soften the terror they must have been feeling; indeed, she was exacerbating it. She adds, 'When it came to saying goodbye the youngest, Emmet, was sneaking his handkerchief to wipe away a few tears that had escaped. I pretended not to see, and was nearer tears myself than they knew'.[363] So Emmet (aged eight) had not only learned that tears were shameful, and to be concealed, but was not allowed to see how much his mother cared that she was being separated from them. They had lost their father, traumatically, only two years previously, and now they would be technically orphans for an unknown length of time. It was fortunate that Daly was able to contact his aunts in Limerick, and that they were soon taken to safety there.

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362 RTE, 'Donncha's Sunday', broadcast 7 April 1991.
363 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, pp. 196-7.

Despite this seeming cold-bloodedness, it is clear from letters that Clarke worried desperately about her sons while she was in Holloway. She missed their conversation, and constantly asked them for letters, giving great praise when they did write. Daly, aged sixteen, was very slow to write, and his aunt Madge complained that he seemed uninterested in anything, and doing poorly at school. However, the arrest had been very traumatic; there was little recognition by his aunt or his mother that he was probably quite depressed and anxious, more perhaps than the younger boys. Even when she was home from Holloway, the boys did not get all of her attention by any means; she left them in Limerick for a large part of the time, sometimes just keeping Emmet with her in Dublin. When she was working as a judge for the Dáil Courts, she was recalled to Dublin in a hurry for a trial. She had been having a holiday in Glendalough with her sons, but their time with her was again cut short.

Clarke does express sympathy for some of the shocks her sons were exposed to during the War of Independence, although she writes, when Daly was having his chin felt by Black and Tans to judge his age: '*I* knew real fear for the first and only time...It took *me* some time to get over the horror of it' (my italics).[364] But Daly was terrified, and during a subsequent raid in Limerick he was found half-way out a window trying to escape. As the house was surrounded, he would have been shot instantly if he had not been stopped. It seems to me that she downplays a lot of their experiences. Being searched for gold at Limerick Junction, for example, must have been a nerve-racking experience for them all, but the boys were hardly consulted about it. Of course they were doubtless well prepared, and ready to do their bit for Ireland, but that would not be a comfortable experience either, and would surely leave its mark. She expected a lot of her sons, as Tom had done in his final interview with her.[365] However, perhaps it was only possible for her to write the memoir by burying such emotion; if she described her sons' fears, she might be driven also to revisit her own.

Since Daly's health had never really recovered from the diphtheria he contracted aged three, it is often on Clarke's mind, and she worried about him far more than the others, who were more robust. While she was in Holloway she heard that some of the family in Limerick had come down with influenza, and tortured herself by imagining that Daly had caught it too. She argued with her sister Madge about sending him to school: '...three times has his health broken down at ordinary school, enough, I would say, to make the most sceptical pause...on no account would I have agreed to Mungret'.[366] Daly did go to Mungret College, though, and seems to have survived the experience well.

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364 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 239.
365 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, pp. 137-8.
366 U.L., Glucksman Library, Letter, Clarke to Madge Daly, P2/41 (13), 29 August 1918.

When Markievicz was staying with Clarke, after they were both released from Holloway, she had to escape from a threatened raid. Despite the curfew, she hoped to get to Margaret Skinnider's house nearby. Clarke got Tom and Emmet out of bed and sent them out in the middle of the night to tell Skinnider that Markievicz was on her way, and to leave the door open. Markievicz was short-sighted, 'and I heard later that she kept wandering up and down and whispering “Margaret, Margaret,”, until Miss Skinnider heard her and brought her in'. That makes a funny story, but it was hard on the two boys. She does, however, acknowledge that on this occasion: 'I often think back and think what a very hard life my children had after the Rising...Later that night, they were pulled out of bed [again] for the British soldiers to search their beds...but those lads never showed the slightest sign of fear, though naturally they must have felt the strain of it...No woman ever had better sons'.[367]

It is notable that Clarke's middle son, Tom, is much less often mentioned than the other two. They had been separated shortly after his birth, when she moved to Dublin and left him in Limerick. Here his grandmother became deeply attached to him, and was very reluctant to give him back to his mother. Clarke herself admitted to a family member that she never really bonded with him. In the will she wrote while in Holloway, Tom seems to receive less than the other two: 'To Daly his papa's watch, tools, American & Limerick citizen papers, the watch to go to Emmet in case of Daly's death. To Tom, the piece of Moore St house wall & I.V. Commission. To Emmet, the doorway from Moore St, my watch & his papa's ticket-of-leave'.[368] Why would the watch not go to Tom, the next son in line, in the event of Daly's death? Tellingly, a will dated 6 April 1962 leaves a house to Daly (172 Richmond Road) and the contents of her Sandymount home, 17 Serpentine Road, to Emmet, along with any articles on loan to the National Museum. Everything else is left in equal shares to Daly and Emmet, the two executors.[369] Something must have permanently damaged the fragile relationship between mother and son.

The sons are not mentioned in the memoir after the Civil War period. Even though Emmet moved into the Mansion House with her, he is not name-checked.

Clarke's personality

Early in the memoir, Clarke writes about her childhood and family background, but she slips more into the background after her marriage, concentrating on Tom and the progress towards rebellion. However, one can trace a development from a relatively carefree, happy young woman, with golden

367 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 223.
368 U.L., Glucksman Library, Letter, Clarke to Carrie Daly, P2/39, 16 June 1918.
369 N.L.I., Clarke papers MS 49, 357/3/5.

hair and bright blue eyes, to a committed and serious-minded revolutionary. She loved to play the piano, enjoyed practising her skills of dressmaking and tailoring, and built up a successful business with her sister Agnes. Marrying a man twenty years older, she became rather a drudge, constrained by the demands of three children, two shops and a house to run, as well as keeping track of Clan na Gael money. Even when life became more exciting, in the Central Branch of Cumann na mBan, she was aware all the time that if Tom's plans came to fruition, the likelihood was that their relationship would end tragically.

And it was Tom who made the decisions, particularly the decisive one about coming back to Ireland from the U.S.A., no matter how happy Kathleen was there. She does not speak about the wrench of leaving her family to go so far away – indeed, she relished the prospect of being alone with Tom at last. Yet there must have been lonely times, and she touches on it briefly: 'I missed the chat, the laughter, the noise, and sometimes the quarrels, of the big family'.[370] She was alone all day, in a cramped apartment where she had to wear slippers not to disturb the people downstairs. The living quarters they could afford in New York were in what was seen as 'slum' areas, teeming with other emigrants, a huge change from the big house with domestic help in Limerick. When they moved to the countryside of Long Island, her really happy years began, but did not last.

Stoicism certainly ran in the family, as exemplified by the child Kathleen listening to her mother giving birth to Annie in the upstairs bedroom, and only hearing 'the odd moan'.[371] Catharine Daly had a fairly hard life herself, until her brother-in-law James came to their aid when she was widowed. Of her ten children, nine survived, and she worked very hard to keep them in school and looking respectable. However, she worried about Kathleen marrying Tom, and said to her 'that when poverty comes in the door, love flies out the window', which seems to speak of experience.[372] A strong republican, she suffered many raids of her home in the revolutionary years, during one of which she suffered a broken shoulder which never properly healed. Even in later life she took part in public demonstrations against executions, despite the risk of injury. This was a strong mother to have, a role model who did not break under adversity.

Clarke was very disappointed when her uncle James refused to pay for piano lessons for her, and writes: 'Even to this day I feel regret at not getting a chance at the thing I loved'.[373] She had taught herself to play from her elder sisters' music books. In her younger days, she was renowned in the family for making a party 'go' with her music, and would often play to entertain the younger children.

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370 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 38.
371 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 16.
372 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 32.
373 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 23.

Writing to Tom in 1899, she says, 'the kids are never satisfied unless you're playing dance music for them or dancing with them'.[374] The family seem to have loved not just old Irish songs, or the sentimental 'Oirish' ballads of the late nineteenth century, but also the music of Gilbert and Sullivan, and popular music-hall songs. But the overall tone of the memoir is serious, when you compare it with, for example, the contemporaneous Anglo-Irish memoirs of Lady Fingall and Lady Glenavy, all hunting parties, Dublin Castle balls and art exhibitions.[375]

It has its humorous moments. She describes a summer garden party where one young seamstress, who worked for her mother, went too high on a swing and fell off, and indeed the presence of so many young people in a household and its workplace must have created a lively atmosphere. Her instinct seems often to have been to liven people up, and she describes helping Cumann na mBan girls in Limerick making First Aid outfits, just before the Rising: '...they seemed to sense a crisis, which made them very anxious and troubled'. She cheered them up by singing a popular song about a grasshopper, sung in fugue form, 'and by the time the last girl joined in we were all laughing like idiots...It was all very silly, but it broke up the tension'.[376] However, she was only masking her own tension; while her sisters were thrilled and excited about the coming events, she could only feel anxiety, and a great fear of the future.

In terms of earning a living, she went her own way, and set up a dress-making business in Limerick city centre when she was only eighteen. The family were against it, believing that she was too young and inexperienced, but 'I ignored all they had to say and went on with it'.[377] She started with small rooms in Cecil Street, then enlarged her business in O'Connell Street. She had refused to work in her Uncle John's bakery with her sisters, because she had an independent skill, and also because she did not want to be under the thumb of two elder sisters: 'Uncle John was very angry with me'.[378]This stubbornness served her well when it came to her choice of a husband; her mother and her uncle John put her under great pressure, but she refused to listen to them – she would marry Tom Clarke.

During their courtship, when they were often separated, the tone of her letters was often upbeat, encouraging Tom to keep faith in the future, that once they were together nothing else would matter. The letters after their marriage, when again they were separated for some time, sound more depressed; she missed him dreadfully, and his letters express the same loneliness for her. However, I get the sense

374 N.L.I., Clarke papers MS 49, 352/1/31, 12 December 1899.
375 Elizabeth Countess of Fingall, *Seventy years young* (Dublin, 1991); Beatrice Lady Glenavy *Today we will only gossip*, (London, 1964).
376 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, pp. 103-4.
377 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 24.
378 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 27.

that the years in Dublin between, say, 1910 and 1916 were difficult for her, as Tom was more and more absorbed by I.R.B. activities and meetings, and she was dealing with domestic responsibilities on her own, helped by the occasional maid.

One recreation she did allow herself was keeping dogs. She bred Kerry Blue terriers, a popular dog among nationalists, and mourned a pup that was killed by the Black and Tans. She could never understand how Tom, who spent so many years locked up, could keep caged canaries, but he loved to listen to their song. When she was arrested in 1916, she accused the officer of causing her to abandon a dog, two cats and a dozen canaries. As Lord Mayor, she kept a talking parrot which entertained her.

Clarke describes herself as an ‘imaginative and sensitive child',[379] but this sensitivity seems to have become blunted over the years, judging by family accounts of Kattie's sharp tongue, which spared no-one. Countess Markievicz commented on this in a letter written after Clarke left Holloway: 'I wonder whose head you are snapping off now!'[380] Markievicz had lived closely with Clarke for several months, and they had had several run-ins until they settled better with one another. Another example of her sharpness was just before Easter 1916, when a Céilí was held as a cover for a gathering of men from outside Dublin. When Con Colbert complained to her about holding such an event during Lent, 'I told him not to be so squeamish and to dance while he could, as he might be dancing at the end of a rope one of these days'.[381] She was sorry for having said it, but protests that she was under great strain at the time.

She admits being crying and distressed when visiting MacDiarmada in prison in 1915, because it took a lot of effort to work her way past the guards and convince them to let her in.[382] However, when a mob of soldiers tore down a poster outside their shop, she hung it up again, and faced them down without showing fear, threatening to have them arrested.[383] A really painful memory for her is when she was travelling with others to collect the body of O'Donovan Rossa from England, and had to declare she was English when she was boarding the boat: 'The recollection still hurts'.[384] In late 1923, when she was trying to cross the border from Canada to the U.S.A., illegally, she bluffed her way through an immigration interview with her 'good poker face', and seems to have remained cool throughout.[385]

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379 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 16.
380 Family sources.
381 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 98.
382 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 78.
383 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 58.
384 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 81.
385 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman,* pp. 278-9.

Sometimes emotion is dialled down for the purposes of the memoir. While in Holloway, for example, she was very annoyed by Gonne MacBride sending out a letter which said that she (Clarke) was very ill. In the memoir she describes this fairly calmly: 'It made me furious...I had a really serious row with her over it'.[386] However, she expresses it rather differently in a notebook in which she was drafting her memoir: 'I was angry and I asked Mrs MacBride how dare she write out such a thing, had she any realisation of the trouble she would cause my mother and family, and it was all the more wicked when it was not true...I just danced at her, I was in such a fury'.[387]

Her innate ruthlessness can be seen in a rather shocking episode just before she was arrested at the end of Easter Week, 1916. An elderly lady had called for a visit, and Clarke suddenly saw soldiers coming down the street, obviously to her house. She had in the house some of the money Tom had entrusted to her for dependants, and was determined that the soldiers should not find it. She decided that the older lady would hardly be searched, so should hide the money for her. 'This was easier said than done. She was frightened, and I had to bully her into consenting. She was so terrified at the thought that she was quite helpless, and I was shaking with pent-up excitement.' Clarke stuffed the money into the unfortunate woman's blouse, and remained cool and steady while she opened the door.

The house was searched, but not the women, and the elderly woman and Clarke's maid were left behind while Clarke was taken away. Clarke says of the woman, 'He [the officer] took her name and address, and then told her very rudely to clear off. I breathed a sigh of relief; my money was safe'. She has no word of sympathy for the lady, and does not even bother to give her name. She does not say what happened the money, but it probably came back to her in the end. It's a fairly terrifying story, though.[388] McDiarmid speaks of it as 'a moment of barely consensual but desperate intimacy', but it was scarcely a type of intimacy anyone would welcome.[389]

Clarke is not introspective, or at any rate does not allow that to enter the book. Her inner life is out of bounds. There is little reference to religion, unusual in such a pious environment as the Irish Free State. However, Fenian families resented the Catholic church, as the Fenians had been excommunicated. She probably attended Mass regularly, as it would have been commented on if she had not. She speaks slightingly in letters to Tom of her mother's little pieties, calling them 'superstitions', and is very annoyed when she is expected to be 'churched' (i.e. purified) after the birth of her son Tom in Limerick. However, according to her sister Laura, when she and Madge arrived in

386 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 207.
387 N.L.I., Clarke papers, K.C. Notebook (1918-19), cited in L. McDiarmid, 'Comradeship', in L. Connolly (ed.), *Women and the Irish revolution* (Dublin, 2020), p. 42.
388 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, pp. 124-5.
389 McDiarmid, *At home in the revolution*, pp. 126-7.

Dublin just after Tom's execution, 'The minute she opened the door she burst into tears and said "'Twas Our Lady sent you", because she prayed that somebody would come from Limerick'.[390]

When a priest tries to get her to change Tom's mind about Confession before his execution, she is irritated, endorsing Tom's refusal to express contrition. This is hardly the response of a devout Catholic, but she appointed a personal chaplain when she became Lord Mayor. Perhaps that was just what was expected, but she did speak warmly of the Carmelite friars who helped the combatants during and after the Rising.

In 1934 her son Daly was suggested as a director of a planned radio station, and the secretary of the Catholic Truth Society wrote an assessment to the Archbishop of Cashel: 'He...is very level-headed, and impressed me as to his competence. His mother is not a practising Catholic, but she is spoken of very highly as a social worker [something the memoir doesn't touch on at all]...I think contact with people holding strong Catholic views would make up for what he has lacked in his upbringing'.[391]

For a woman who prided herself on sturdy common-sense, Clarke put a lot of faith in her occasional vivid dreams—seeing Tom before she actually met him, being sent back to life after the Rising, Tom urging her to vote against the Oath.[392] It was rumoured in the family that she allowed seances to be held in the Mansion House during her time there. This was a fashionable recreation of the time, and it is hard to believe she expected any benefit from it, but perhaps she hoped for a message from the beyond.

Even when pushed to the brink, Clarke maintained a stoic facade. A powerful example is when she is called from the cell in Dublin Castle to be brought to say goodbye to Tom. Her fellow-prisoner, Miss Perolz, when she told her what was happening, said, 'God, you're a stone!'.[393] Interviewed on television fifty years later, in 1966, that comment sticks in Clarke's memory. Clearly she felt it was unfair, because inside she was horrified by what was coming, but her exterior rarely betrayed her.

At one particular point in the memoir, she does seem to regret her ability to keep her emotions deeply buried. That is during her last interview with her husband Tom, and she writes regretfully, 'During the whole interview my mind was concentrated on not breaking down. I knew that if I broke, it would break him, at least I feared it would, and perhaps leave him unfit to face the ordeal before him in the way he and I would like...Looking back, I often wonder if he understood my seeming coldness...How I

390 H. O'Keeffe, *To speak of Easter Week* (Cork, 2015), p. 77.
391 Frank O'Reilly, quoted in J. Horgan, '1930s campaign for private radio', *Irish Times*, 29 September 1983, p.10.
392 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman,* pp. 30-1, 161-2, 287.
393 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 134.

held myself together, with my head up, I do not know. I must have been turned to stone, as Miss Perolz had said, but the sound of that key in that lock has haunted me ever since'.[394]

Friends and relations

Clarke occasionally speaks highly of other women, such as Sorcha MacMahon, but almost entirely in the context of what great workers and colleagues they were. She says of MacMahon, 'we became fast friends and still remain so, a friendship founded on love, trust and admiration', which is positively gushing for Clarke. She is more personal about Gonne MacBride and Markievicz, as a result of the time they spent together in Holloway, and she and the Countess built a fairly close relationship. Yet she does not mention Markievicz's 1924 death in the memoir. She seems to have been quite close to Dr Kathleen Lynn, but Lynn is only mentioned in the context of Clarke's medical emergencies. As recorded above, the decision to enter the Dáil in 1926 caused a breach between the two until 1930.

There are glimpses of friendships in other people's archives. Mrs Ceannt, writing to her sister Lily, in prison during the Civil War, refers several times to Mrs Clarke – Mrs C. is going to London for medical treatment (not mentioned in the memoir), the Ceannts are looking after her dogs for a few days, the Clarke sons are doing well at school. 'Tomorrow Mrs Tom Clarke is taking me for a short drive in a new car which Madge [Daly] has bought and is bringing to Limerick next week.'[395] The families seem close, yet Mrs Ceannt is only mentioned in the memoir as a colleague, helping to run the I.N.A.&V.D.F. and the White Cross; Lily is mentioned twice among other lists of colleagues. Thomas Ashe corresponded with Madge Daly, and Ó Luing writes, 'the closest ties of friendship and sympathy had bound Ashe with the family of John Daly and Tom Clarke', yet Ashe is not mentioned at all, even after his death on hunger strike in 1917.[396]

Another who seems to have been important in Clarke's life was Brigid Lyons Thornton of Cumann na mBan. She remembers that after the Rising, Clarke was 'a frequent visitor to Aunt Joe's house' — 'Aunt Joe' was Mrs Joe McGuinness (Brigid's aunt), and the McGuinnesses had been friends of the Clarkes in New York. She continues, 'In spite of her sacrifices, [Clarke] remained a dignified, serene woman'.[397] That summer, Lyons Thornton spent much time with Clarke and Aunt Joe in Clarke's garden: 'It was a comfort to the widow to have them and their friends in those desolate months...often she went over her grim experiences when she was brought to Kilmainham Gaol twice within twenty-

394 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 140.
395 U.C.D.A., O'Brennan papers P13/66, 1 June 1923.
396 S. Ó Luing, I die in a good cause, Thomas Ashe, a biography (Dublin, 1917), p. 167.
397 J. Cowell, A noontide blazing, Brigid Lyons Thornton, rebel, soldier, doctor (Dublin, 2023), pp. 100-1.

four hours for her last words'.[398] Clarke had clearly decided that it was better to talk about her grief to close friends, rather than bury it.

This friendship was soon lost, as the families took opposite sides in the Civil War. Lyons Thornton, a doctor, became a Medical Officer in Kilmainham Jail, and was horrified when in 1922 Clarke was brought in as a prisoner. 'Of all people, it was Mrs Tom Clarke. “We meet in strange places”, she said. She was hurt to see me there, and I was hurt to meet her. In every way it was all too, too cruel...I will never forget the misery I felt that night. I reported next morning on medical grounds and she was immediately released'.[399] The McGuinnesses are mentioned in the memoir (Clarke canvassed for Joe in the 1917 Longford election), but Lyons Thornton is not mentioned at all.

A notable feature of these varied recollections is that Clarke is never referred to as 'Kathleen' or 'Kattie' (her family name). A respectful distance is kept; she is always 'Mrs Tom Clarke'. Perhaps that is simply what she preferred. A couple of brutal references by Madge, when the sisters were fighting in 1925 (see below) shed some light on this lack of close friendships. She writes, '...I waited before answering [your letter] until my anger abated and then ignored your insults, realizing that you had few real friends outside your own family...you seem to have a genius for writing nasty letters and alienating friends with carping criticism'.[400]

Naturally, many relationships were severed during the Civil War, and more when the decision was made to enter Dáil Éireann. The directional changes made by Clarke, a pragmatist, evoked contempt or abuse among more 'diehard' contemporaries, and one of these was, sadly, Madge Daly. This relationship is not discussed in the memoir, but Madge, the businesswoman of the family, often helped the Clarkes financially, and continued to assist Kathleen over the years, sometimes surreptitiously. During their angry exchange (see above), Madge writes, 'I gave £200 to J.J. Reynolds last year to keep your shop going, but I told him not to mention who gave it'.[401] But Kathleen hated to be dependent on anyone, particularly Madge, and often reacted aggressively, insisting that she did not 'need charity', even when she did.

The serious row in 1925 was about relatives of the executed men visiting Arbour Hill for the annual commemorations. They had refused to do so while the graves were not open to the public (it was an army barracks), but apparently Clarke had changed her mind. Madge wrote to the papers saying that her family would never do so, and Clarke was very annoyed that Madge should seem to speak for her:

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398 J. Cowell, *A noontide blazing*, pp. 107-8.
399 J. Cowell, *A noontide blazing*, pp. 231-2.
400 Madge Daly papers, U.L., Glucksman Library, P2/365/3 (5).
401 Madge Daly papers, U.L., Glucksman Library, P2 356/3 (5).

'It's about time you'd wake up to a realization of the fact that I'm a thinking human being able to act, think and talk for myself *when I choose*, and that I cannot allow even a sister to say what I will and will not do...Its [sic] possible there may be something radically wrong with myself, but I cannot get up that intense bitterness to those in power which you possess.'[402]

Madge replied, 'When I saw the report of relatives at Arbour Hill, I wrote denying it and expected you also to repudiate it. I could have staked my soul that you were not there. Next morning I got your letter stating that you had taken their pension and I realized that I could be sure of nothing and that you and I had grown apart in more ways than one...to me, the government that murdered Mellows and the others as a reprisal, are British hirelings doing England's work as Maxwell did it in 1916...I return your letter, and suggest that you refrain from posting your letters in future until you sleep on them'.[403]

The memoir gives very little space to the Clarke family, apart from the help his sister Hannah gave Tom when he was starting his tobacconist shop. Kathleen met Hannah and Mrs Clarke when she and Tom became engaged, but the relationship never seems to have warmed. They knew his sister Maria in New York. Hannah, also a member of Cumann na mBan, lived for a while with Clarke in the 1930s, after her mother died. Hannah died in 1950, and Clarke is listed as a chief mourner, with Tom Junior and Emmet.[404] That death falls outside the scope of the memoir, but there is no mention of the elder Mrs Clarke's death in 1922, nor of the canal drowning of Tom's brother Alfred in November 1917. Alfred was missing for two weeks before his body was found, and he left a widow and five children, yet this dramatic event is not noted at all.

Personality assessment

Clarke's personality changed through her long life, as is true for most people. The light-hearted but hard-working and ambitious dressmaker grew into a talented organiser and money-manager, always available for whatever support was needed in a turbulent time. The assertive side of her was always there; she was combative in the family environment, particularly with Madge, the sister closest to her in age, and visiting after marriage found living in close proximity to her family extremely irritating. Her relationship with her mother may not have been warm, but she always asks after her health in letters, and is concerned to hear about any illness in the family. Still, she seems happier at a distance.

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402 Madge Daly papers, U.L., Glucksman Library, P2 356/3 (4). She follows that with 'I hope Mama is improved by her trip & that Ag is OK. Love to all, Kathleen'.
403 Madge Daly papers, U.L. Glucksman Library, P2 356/3 (5).
404 *Irish Press*, 14 October 1950, p. 7.

During her most active political years, she was prominent on committees and boards, and often acted as chairperson. She is clearly respected as a competent presence, who will act without prejudice. She may be opinionated, but is someone you would want on your side. She condemns British policies, but has friendly interactions with individual police or soldiers. But as she aged, she seems to have retreated within herself; in her letters, there are many references to loneliness. She had suffered great losses, and could be seen as embittered. She is increasingly prickly and difficult to deal with, to be approached with care. Her political opinions have become fixed and sclerotic, and more outdated by the year. It is still astonishing that she maintained a high public profile for so long, and more so when considering the state of her health throughout her life.

CONCLUSIONS

When I started this research, I thought that a study of Clarke's memoir would be useful as tracing a trajectory for the history of Irish women in public life through the revolutionary period, and into the Irish Free State. However, I have realised that Clarke's story cannot act as a template for any other Irish woman. She was a trailblazer, following no-one, and in the long run no-one followed her. No other woman acted as a mentor to her, and she did not act as a mentor to anyone, as far as one can see. She dug a lonely furrow for much of her political career; most of the women who started out with her, aiming for the goal of a true republic, retired from the fray at various stages. By the time of Clarke's retirement, in the 1940s, hardly any women remained in the Oireachtas. Between 1927 and 1981, numbers varied between two and five, or 4% of the available seats; numbers shot up in 1981, to the unheard of number of eleven, but women are still far from equally represented.

For a long time it was glibly stated that women in Irish politics were there only because of their male relatives. For many it was true: 'Of the ten elected to the Dáil between 1922 and 1937, seven were relatives of revolutionary heroes, and of nine women elected between 1957 and 1969, eight were widows of former Dáil members'.[405] However, it is equally true to say that many male politicians get their start by inheriting a father's or uncle's or brother's seat; political representation in Ireland is very often a family tradition, and not always the worst. And it is still not easy for women to enter politics, even in 2023. As Beard has said, 'when we are thinking about underrepresentation of women in national politics...we have to think beyond issues of family-friendly hours, childcare provision or all women shortlists...the fact remains women who put their head above the parapet have a much harder time than men. We have to think about that in a calm, historical, analytical way'.[406]

Clarke, to be sure, started off in a strongly republican family, with a history of political activism (often violent), so had a head start. So did her sisters, yet she was the only one to follow through on a political career. Although several of them were active in Cumann na mBan, and two married Volunteers, they all returned to private life after the excitement of the revolutionary years. It was Clarke's marriage to one of the major leaders of the Easter Rising which gave her, so to speak, an extra leg-up, but other women in the same position could have followed that path too, and few did. Since her losses were great (husband, brother, unborn child), her drive to make sure that those losses were not in vain was equally great, and was never deflected, although she lived and worked through years

405 J. Knirck, Women of the Dáil, gender, republicanism and the Anglo-Irish Treaty (Dublin, 2006), p.170.
406 M. Beard, cited in S. McCoole, 'Debating not negotiating: The female TDs of the second Dáil', in L. Weeks & and M. Ó Fathartaigh, *The Treaty, debating and establishing the Irish state* (Dublin, 2018), p. 156.

when women in Irish politics were rather reviled than praised. She broke a mould, and no-one has since remade it.

So where was my research to go from here?

I thought of focusing on trauma, and the effects of trauma. Of course such effects can be noted in the memoir, but in a very subdued way, starting with the loss of her father in 1890, when she was twelve: 'his death ended the childhood of the three eldest, Eileen, Madge and myself. Our mother was prostrate with grief, as were our aunt and grandmother, and this forced on us responsibilities not normally placed on children's shoulders'[407]. Is there a sense of resentment there, as well as grief?

Clarke may have been reluctant to revisit bad times and tragic events, but she forced herself to do so for the wider good, that of reviving the status of Tom Clarke in the revolutionary movement. Her emotions can seem flattened at times when one would expect her to be devastated, but certain important events are described in great detail. As she says in her introduction, 'The events themselves are as vivid and clear in my mind as when they happened; some of them could not be eradicated'.[408] There is no denial here; when she wants to, she can reclaim her memories without mercy. I decided to leave trauma alone – it would require a background in psychology.

In the end, I have uncovered a great deal more detail about her life than she was willing to give, and filled in some gaps in her chronology. I have endeavoured to analyse her personality, as far as possible, but one can never fully enter into anyone else's mind, certainly not one dead over fifty years, and born in the century before last. I hope I have managed to emphasise her importance in the development of the Irish Republic, and have laid down a marker for someone else to follow. She deserves a full-scale biography, and a much higher place in the lists of those women who worked for Ireland during the revolutionary period and after.

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407 Clarke, Revolutionary woman, p. 21.
408 Clarke, Revolutionary woman , p. 8.

APPENDIX

TOM CLARKE

While I have come to know Kathleen Clarke better, I also feel that I have learned a lot about Tom Clarke, which I did not expect. I wrote a biography of Tom for the O'Brien Press series 'Sixteen Lives', and I thought I had assessed him fairly well.[409] However, my research through a number of contemporary and later archives has broadened my view of him, as seen through the eyes of others. Kathleen wrote a character sketch of him which of course is entirely positive, and echoes her assessment of him in *Revolutionary woman*. It ends, 'To the outside world he was stern, rather abrupt in manner, but in his home he was the kindest and the most considerate and thoughtful of men'.[410]

In the biography, I wrote:

'A person of intense self-control, the only man to emerge from imprisonment whole and intact in mind and body...[Tom] nonetheless allowed passion to deflect him from his committed path when he met and married Kathleen Daly....O'Hegarty asserts that his imprisonment, "while it certainly strengthened his political faith, left him without bitterness and utterly without that passion for revenge which is ascribed to him".[411] This does not ring true; he could not have given so many years to building up a revolutionary body, dealing with the inevitable personality struggles and competing egos, attracting the energy and devotion of so many young people to whom his past was a vague rumour, without a deep inner drive. He must occasionally have considered making peace with his history, settling into domestic happiness, making a modest living and watching his sons grow up, but such an urge would have been rejected as weakness...

'He rarely aroused anger or irritation; even those who ultimately disagreed with him ...do not blame him for being intransigent or obstructive – they surmise that he was badly advised, or under MacDiarmada's influence. But Tom Clarke was his own man, and any shortcomings are his own too. He could be suspicious and secretive, occasionally judging people harshly on little evidence, and his trust once lost was lost forever...'[412]

409 H. Litton, *Sixteen lives: Tom Clarke* (Dublin, 2014).
410 N.L.I., Clarke papers MS 49, 355/12; Clarke, *Revolutionary woman,* pp. 96-7.
411 P.S. O'Hegarty, Introduction to T. Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish felon's prison life* (Dublin, 1922), p. xvii.
412 Litton, *Tom Clarke*, pp. 209-10.

I would revise some of those statements now. McCullough and others seem to have thought of him as a simple, or even simple-minded, man, who took people on face value and trusted easily. Perhaps the views of people who actually knew him, and worked closely with him, should be taken more into account. Kathleen lived with him for fifteen years; she would have seen both the simple man, entertained by the song of canaries, a lover of flowers, happy to play with his children, and the driven revolutionary, whose vision narrowed more and more as the time for action drew nearer. She hints a couple of times at his temper, and it is hard to imagine that someone who lived through fifteen years of brutal prison treatment, including a good deal of solitary confinement, would not suffer swings of emotion and frustration.

He kept himself sane in prison, he said, by mental calculations. 'Not only have I counted every brick in my cell and every bolt that studded the ironclad doors, and every perforation in the iron ventilators in that cell, and calculated the weight of the bricks used in building it, and also worked out the number of bricks used in building the entire prison and figured out the total weight...'[413] Such intense concentration, over so many years, can hardly be conducive to the emergence, ultimately, of a well-balanced personality. Yet Tom survived, to charm the Daly sisters with his sense of humour and practical jokes, and to captivate one particular Daly sister for life.

It is worth remembering that as a young man he had displayed talent as an actor, 'star artist of the local drama club', using this as cover for revolutionary activities; indeed, 'he refused an invitation by...a famous actor-manager, to join his touring company'.[414] Certainly he played the part of a mild-mannered shopkeeper for years, masking his deeper intentions. But perhaps he was always what he seemed on the surface, unaware of the extent to which someone like MacDiarmada could have been manipulating him.

Tom was definitely one of the prime movers of the Rising, reviving the almost-defunct I.R.B., bringing forward younger men such as MacDiarmada and McCullough. But judging from, for example, the fact that (much to Kathleen's disgust) he was left out of the crisis meeting that took place after Casement's arrest, I would surmise that Tom was gradually sidelined, and that the younger men were making the real decisions.[415] That his signature came first on the Proclamation may have been a gesture to the old man, out of respect for his I.R.B. links and his long imprisonment, but with no commitment that he would actually have a leading role if the Rising was successful.

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413 Clarke, *Glimpses*, pp. 68-9.
414 Louis Le Roux, *Tom Clarke and the Irish freedom movement*, (Dublin, 1936), pp. 15-16.
415 Clarke, *Revolutionary woman*, p. 106.

From comments made in other archives, a number of activists, who would have known them both well, believed that MacDiarmada basically called the shots, and that Tom was kept in the dark more than Kathleen would have cared to believe. McCullough in particular was keen to insist on Tom's simplicity and lack of deviousness, but he may have been invested in this picture of Tom because he would otherwise have had to admit that he had been manipulated himself. McCartan, writing to McCullough, recalls being assured by Tom in 1916 about a German landing: 'Tom Clarke believed on Good Friday night that there would be a German landing. He would not lie to me and if he did I think I would know he was telling me lies. But Tom could not tell you or I lies'.[416]

In another statement, McCullough says he asked MacDiarmada about the Presidency: 'I said, “Who have you in mind?” “Leave that to me”, said Seán, “Tom and myself have that fixed.” Of course Tom and he fixed everything. Or, in other words, MacDiarmada fixed everything. Tom Clarke was in Seán MacDiarmada's pocket (Tom was a simple man and if he trusted a man he took what he said absolutely)'.[417]

My opinion is moving to place Tom in the mid-rank, useful in the early stages but about to be jettisoned by the younger men like a booster rocket, and probably not the Presidential mastermind that Kathleen worked hard to create in her readers' minds. Foy says that 'Clarke's significance in modern Irish history is indisputable'.[418] But the real character of that deeply-cloaked man will remain a mystery to us.

416 U.C.D.A., McCullough papers P120/11 (1).
417 U.C.D.A., McCullough papers P120/31 (1).
418 T. Foy, *Tom Clarke* (Dublin, 2014), p. 245.

EPILOGUE

In 1969 Kathleen Clarke moved to Liverpool, to live with her son Emmet, his wife Nellie and their sons Tom and Emmet. She probably would not have wanted to spend her last years in England, but could no longer live on her own. She was having difficulty engaging maids (two had robbed her), and was becoming more enfeebled. Her son Daly was crippled with arthritis, and his wife Mary had her hands full looking after him. Tom and his wife Maureen lived in Limerick, and she did not want to move there. Emmet and Nellie were the parents of her only grandchildren, whom she adored, and they invited her to live with them when she was ready.

Emmet wrote an account of her later years to her sister Nora: 'Last year we moved to a bungalow so that Mam would not have to climb stairs...during the last year she has been failing so that her memory is not good and she has stopped reading, writing, and taking an interest generally. She has also been getting up repeatedly during the night and has been having frequent falls'.[419] When Emmet wrote again, after Kathleen's death, he said that she had spent the last few months in a nursing home. This was essential, because 'we were kept going twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week as there was nobody to give us a hand... [and] would have eventually cracked-up from lack of rest'. Kathleen died on 19 September 1972, aged ninety-six; 'Mam took bad about 6 a.m. and was dead before 9.30 a.m. I was with her and she passed away very peacefully'.[420] Emmet was awarded a funeral grant of £45.27 by the Department of Defence.[421]

An indication of her importance in Ireland's history was that Kathleen Clarke was given a State Funeral, a rare honour for a woman. It was extensively covered in the media, and the mourners were headed by President Éamon de Valera, Taoiseach Jack Lynch and the Papal Nuncio. Mrs Seán T. O'Kelly attended, as did a representative of Archbishop Ryan of Dublin, and members of Old I.R.A. and Old Cumann na mBan. Family members present were her sons Tom and Emmet Clarke, with Emmet's sons, and Kathleen's sister Nora Dore, aged eighty. Her other surviving sister, Carrie, aged eighty-six, was prevented from attending by ill health. The Pro-Cathedral was packed, and the coffin was draped with the Tricolour. The cortège paused outside both the G.P.O. and the Mansion House on its way to Deansgrange Cemetery. Three volleys were fired over the grave, and the Last Post was sounded.

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419 Letter, Emmet Clarke to Nora Dore, 13 September 1972, Dore Archive.
420 Letter, E.C. to N.D., 30 October 1972, Dore Archive.
421 B.M.H. M.S.P. 34 REF 61087.

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