

## Examining The Gendered Aspects of Paternity Leave in Post-Conflict Situations: a Tribute to Deceased Males Country: Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

War has a significant impact on both the development and negotiation of gender identities. Yet, it is still uncertain to what extent peace contributes to the preservation or restoration of the gender hierarchy in post-conflict environments. This study aims to develop a thorough understanding of the gender-related difficulties linked to the postwar commemoration of the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland. It achieves this by analyzing ethnographic fieldwork carried out from 2003 to 2006 and reviewing current literature on significant landscapes. Since the cessation of paramilitary activity in 1994, it is noteworthy that the landscapes that have been created (and, consequently, the current state of affairs) give priority to interpretations of historical events. Despite its inclusion in the 1998 Belfast Agreement, which aimed to resolve over three decades of ethno-nationalist conflict, achieving gender parity remains an elusive goal. The primary cause for this phenomenon is the persistent historical misconception that strengthens specific gender standards while seeming to serve the "national project." The stories of women have been suppressed and fragmented as a result of the conflicting historical narratives projected onto the physical world by masculine ideologies linked with Irish nationalism/republicanism and British unionism/loyalism. This has resulted in a heightened dissemination and opacity of women's history. It is crucial to assess the possible contributions that women can make in shaping the future, given the current circumstances.

**Keywords:** Northern Ireland; women; conflict; remembering; nationalism

### Introduction

The Northern Ireland conflict, spanning three decades, resulted in the loss of around 3,700 lives, with males constituting the majority of the casualties (McKittrick et al., 2004). The user's text does not provide any information to rewrite in an academic manner. The historical narratives of largely male-to-male conflicts have frequently neglected the experiences and different perspectives of women. Nevertheless, there is minimal room for contention regarding the substantial impact of the conflict on women (Morgan, 1996) and their crucially important, albeit varied, roles. In recent times, feminist scholars have initiated an inquiry into these perspectives, with a specific emphasis on examining the overt and covert functions undertaken by women from Northern Ireland during the period commonly referred to as the Troubles. Numerous scholarly investigations have been conducted to capture the sometimes overlooked experiences of women in their roles as wives and mothers subsequent to the incarceration or demise of their husbands and sons. The topic under

consideration is the involvement of women in public protests and peace-building efforts (Lentin, 1997; Hammond Callaghan, 2002; Ashe, 2006b).

Additionally, attention is given to instances of violence targeting men, as well as the violation of private spaces and traditional boundaries (Edgerton, 1986; McWilliams; Pickering, 2000). Furthermore, the more recent phenomenon of women's engagement in paramilitary activities is also examined (Alison, 2004). While academic studies have recognized the significance of these frequently disregarded tales, their portrayal in the cultural sphere has been marked by explicit sexism and significant limitations. The manifestation of this phenomenon is particularly conspicuous in the commemorative environment that has been established subsequent to the establishment of peace in 1994, persistently promoting an exaggeratedly macho perspective of historical and contemporary events. The primary objective of this research is to highlight the gendered aspects of commemoration in post-conflict Northern Ireland. This will be achieved through an analysis of the physical manifestations of memorial items, including monuments, plaques, and street murals. The present article is predominantly qualitative in nature and draws upon research conducted in Northern Ireland during the period from September 2004 to January 2007.

It incorporates interview data gathered from 25 semi-structured interviews, all of which were recorded, with individuals representing various political parties, victim groups, armed forces, and the general public. The persons interviewed for this study could not be located using scientific sampling approaches. Initially, I initiated communication with multiple victim organizations that emerged in response to the crisis. Each of these associations represented a unique set of experiences, including those of individuals who were victimized by state or Republican aggression. In the region of Northern Ireland, I additionally reached out to the prominent political parties, individuals with prior incarceration experiences, and militant outfits. Owing to the delicate nature of the issue, a considerable proportion of organizations shown hesitancy in engaging, with the bulk of participants opting for anonymity. Furthermore, this study incorporates supplementary data obtained through informal discussions with persons encountered during the fieldwork process. The process of participant observation, specifically focusing on rituals and commemorative practices such as unveilings, marches, and annual celebrations, was considered crucial in acquiring a foundational comprehension of the gendered makeup of communities and social collectives. These practices provided a distinct viewpoint on the intricacies of gendered commemoration.

The incorporation of media analysis and its subsequent enhancement considerably enriched our study. The study primarily focuses on concrete tributes to the conflict, such as statues, street murals, monuments, and gardens of remembering. The landscape was approached as a "text" for critical examination, prompting the undertaking of mapping, photographing, and interpreting about three hundred memorials and commemorative street murals within the area. Challenges within the urban and rural areas of the region's cities, municipalities, and villages. This article examines the extent to which the concept of "peace" has contributed to the discourse

surrounding gender identities in times of war. Drawing on the scholarly contributions of Edwards (2000), Heffernan and Medlicott (2004), and Muzini and Yeoh (2005), this study posits that the built environment plays a significant role in either reinforcing or reconstructing gender roles. These authors highlight the capacity of cultural landscapes to serve as evocative sites that convey and potentially perpetuate specific notions of masculinity and femininity in relation to power dynamics and territorial disputes, making them pivotal in ethno-nationalist conflicts (Johnson 1994; Whelan 2003, 2005).

The cultural landscapes of Northern Ireland exhibit a patriarchal social structure, wherein males have a dominant role in forming and defining societal norms, notwithstanding occasional endeavours to attain gender parity. Throughout the duration of the fighting, women were noticeably absent. According to Ward (2004), In contrast to prevailing societal perceptions, the 1998 Belfast Agreement, also referred to as the Agreement, incorporated provisions for gender equality as part of its overarching objective to bring an end to political violence. Despite its seeming progressiveness, it might be argued that true equality has not yet been attained, since women still face considerable underrepresentation in various fields and continue to experience marginalization in the realm of politics (Ward, 2004). However, the societal tension that was formerly considered less important than the political struggle is now becoming more apparent (Burk, 2003) as the public's memory of the conflict grows during times of relative peace.

#### **Looking at memory and gender in the memorial landscape**

In recent years, scholars such as Foote (1997), Till (1999), Shackel (2003), and Lahiri (2003) have made significant contributions to our understanding of how cultural landscapes can serve as a means of both reflecting and shaping modern social and political identities and values. The information collected by 336 S. McDowell from the University of Ulster in Coleraine, commonly referred to as their "emblematic" acquisition, is widely recognised. Elements, referred to as "materialised discourses" (Schein, as described in Dwyer, 1999), play a crucial role in cultural landscapes as they encapsulate and convey significance. Consequently, these elements are closely intertwined with notions of location, memory, and authority. Nevertheless, the meanings of these entities are subject to negotiation, contestation, and questioning through the concurrent processes of materialisation and memorialization. It is important to note that these entities are neither passive or solely representative in nature.

An increasing corpus of scholarly literature highlights the dynamic characteristics of material cultures and their ability to stimulate and drive consumer behaviour (Anderson and O'Liya-Kelly, 2004; Hopkins, 2007). They provide biased and consistently biased interpretations of the current situation. Memorial landscapes, by their very nature, tend to exhibit inherent gendered characteristics, often serving as vehicles for the propagation of specific societal or communal expectations for the roles and responsibilities of individuals based on their gender (Monk, 1992). The gendered nature of commemorative landscapes, especially those associated with memories of conflict, is a significant aspect to consider. These landscapes often

document and perpetuate the experiences and stories of men, often leading to misrepresentation or confusion regarding women's perspectives (Muzaini and Yeoh, 2005). The connection between nationalism and nationhood is closely intertwined with the emergence of nations following periods of conflict. In such circumstances, there is often a need to reinstate the notion of masculinity, encompassing elements such as national pride, bravery, physical prowess, and selflessness (Ashe, 2006a). Enloe (1990, 45) posits that nationalism is rooted in the concepts of masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope. Nagle (1998) posits that nations possess an inherent patriarchal structure.

The historical conflicts that took place in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s hold a distinct significance [10]. Throughout history, heritage sites in the United States have predominantly centred on the narratives of "white men," so neglecting the inclusion of individuals from marginalized social groups, including women and ethnic minorities. Feminist civil rights groups aimed to challenge and subvert the prevailing hegemonic power structures by promoting inclusivity. Nevertheless, the concept of inclusion has not consistently resulted in the attainment of equality. In the context of wartime recollections, women's encounters often exhibit gendered stereotypes, so contributing to an interconnected process of trauma. Israeli war monuments serve as commemorative sites that honour and maintain the symbols of the nation, namely those representing the valour and sacrifice of both men and women (Melman, 2002; Baumel, 2002; Feinge, 2002). According to Edwards (2000), in the aftermath of World War I, the memorials in France depicted women in two distinct ways: as suffering mothers and husbands, or as representations of the victorious nation.

According to Sherman (1996, p. 84), the act of memorial had a distinct purpose, which was to restore the gendered social hierarchy that had been shattered by the war. Sherman (1996) argues that the depiction of women engaged in pre-war domestic roles successfully marginalised and suppressed their experiences of independence, while the portrayal of males as military heroes or protectors aligned with prevailing masculine ideals of nationalism. Monuments celebrating the diverse involvement of women during the two world wars have been constructed in London and Sydney as a result of contemporary endeavours to revive and document their stories (Trefalt, 2001). However, the extent of these occurrences has been restricted. The Vietnam Women's Memorial, which was erected on the National Mall in Washington, DC, after a decade of protest and advocacy subsequent to the unveiling of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in 1983, stands as the inaugural commemorative structure dedicated to recognising the military contributions made by women. The present memorial can be contended to possess more characteristics of a trite expression of sentiment rather than a genuine endeavour to acknowledge the multifaceted viewpoints of women in relation to Vietnam. In 1993, Carlson Evans made an observation regarding the historical exclusion of women who have actively participated in American conflicts and battles from creative representations.

The individuals in question were not acknowledged or given due attention, thereby perpetuating the erroneous belief that their contributions were insignificant

or lacked recognition. Furthermore, they have become absent from the rural areas of Vietnam. The commemoration of the conflict in Northern Ireland has exhibited a consistent tendency to prioritise and perpetuate inaccurate narratives. Various communities in the region have engaged in conflicts as they strive to secure representation for their unique experiences and viewpoints on the challenges faced during periods of peace. A total of 337 individuals downloaded the file from the University of Ulster in Coleraine, with consideration given to factors such as gender, location, and culture. On the 13th of August 2008, around 12:10 a.m.

This artwork has been visibly and viscerally memorialised through the creation of murals, plaques, and monuments. These memorials are an integral component of a growing municipal civic infrastructure that pays tribute to paramilitary heroes, predominantly of the male gender. Additionally, local departed individuals are commemorated through the dedication of sports facilities, while prominent political personalities are honoured by having streets and motorways named after them. The memorial material culture encompasses many manifestations of grief, attributions of culpability, contrasting understandings of both past and present events, and valuable perspectives on historical territorial ideologies. Therefore, it may be said that festivities in Northern Ireland function as a perpetuation of the tribal politics that persist in the region, thereby highlighting and examining the distinctions between Republicans, Unionists, and Loyalists (McDowell, 2006).

According to Boyer (1994, 321), these locations often transform into what he refers to as "rhetorical topi," serving as recurring sites for the expression of sanctification through various symbolic acts, including wreath-laying, unveilings, and annual rituals. The concept of "peace" has engendered a phase of reflection and reevaluation, enabling society to contemplate its historical experiences. Although cultural landscapes have served as a platform for engaging in discussions pertaining to challenging realities, Regarding the origins, consequences, and empirical aspects of these issues, there is a concerted effort to reframe the historically and now gendered discourse that has either obscured or solely depicted the many encounters of women in Northern Ireland through the lens of men.

### **Women and the war in the Troubles**

In the early 2000s, Racioppi and O'Sullivan (2000) observed a rise in feminist academic research that delved into the interrelations among nationalism, warfare, and gender. Enloe (1990, 1993; Sullivan 1999), Ward (1989), Moghadam (1993), Sharoni (2001), Allison (2003, 2004), and Yuval-Davis (1997) have conducted research on the examination of women's involvement in the formation and challenge of national identities. They have also explored the significance of motherhood in relation to the national endeavour (Grayzel 1999), as well as the exploitation of women's bodies as targets of violence (Buckley 1993; Aretxaga 2001). Multiple studies have provided evidence for the variety of these experiences, indicating that women's roles within the nation are shaped by societal norms and power dynamics within specific historical periods (Racioppi and O'Sullivan, 2000). Numerous academics concur that nationalism, namely ethno-nationalism, exhibits a strong patriarchal

nature and is well entrenched in conservative discourses. This observation holds true despite the intricate nature of men's connections to nationalist objectives and the concept of the nation (McClintock 1995; Nagle 1998). Aretxaga (1997) argues that conflicts between groups, such as those observed in Northern Ireland, challenge the notion of a predominantly male "landscape." In such instances of conflicts, women are invariably implicated and compelled to adopt active positions that often conform to gendered stereotypes. According to Ward (2004), the influence of "Myths, Symbolism, and National Rhetoric" has played a substantial role in shaping the national agendas of both British nationalism, which aims to maintain the Union with Britain, and Irish nationalism, which strives for a United Ireland (p. 502). During the period known as the Troubles, a significant number of women were assigned domestic duties that contradicted the principles of ethnonationalism.

Republican and nationalist discourse posited that Irish Catholics would engender sizable households, hence augmenting the Catholic electorate's influence in favour of Ireland. There was a prevailing belief that a significant proportion of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland would contribute to the cessation of Unionist dominance and facilitate the establishment of a unified Ireland. Cockburn (1998) and Cooper (1998) posit that Unionist/Loyalist males were anticipated to endorse the concept of "Ulster's Loyal Sons," which encompassed the belief that Protestant women had primary responsibility for tending to their husbands and offspring. Sales (1998) asserts that the aforementioned notion was further strengthened by other institutions that were predominantly controlled by males, such as the Orange Lodge. It was anticipated that two members affiliated with the Republican party and one member associated with the Liberal party would assume responsibility for upholding the principles and values of 338 S. McDowell during their period of confinement. The material was obtained by Ulster University located in Coleraine. On August 13, 2008, at 12:10, individuals serving in security forces and liberation fighters experienced persistent apprehension on the safe return of their colleagues from their respective duties. Dowler (1998) asserts that several public establishments in Northern Ireland, including jails and drinking establishments, primarily served as masculine domains that facilitated the expression of "armed patriarchy" (Edgerton 1986, p. 76).

During the period of conflict, it was observed that private spaces, specifically households, were primarily associated with femininity and were typified by the reinforcement of gender stereotypes (Dowler, 1998). However, during the Troubles, the boundaries between private and public spaces became increasingly blurred as violence extended from the streets to people's homes. This resulted in a significant number of murders taking place in these spaces, as they provided an opportunity for neighbours to identify the residents as being affiliated with one side or the other (Aretxaga, 1997; Reid, 2005; Ashe, 2006a). The spatial segregation of residential areas along religious lines in Northern Ireland facilitated the occurrence of targeted acts of violence within these communities. Women were not solely characterised as docile or obedient individuals during the war. During the initial stages of the conflict, a significant proportion of women actively engaged in political activities and assumed

progressively significant positions beyond the confines of their households. During the 1970s, a collective of primarily Catholic women established the Derry Peace People as a direct reaction to the heinous homicide of Ragner Best, a 19-year-old individual hailing from the Creggan Estate in Derry/Londonderry. Best's untimely demise occurred during his temporary absence from the British Army, as he was tragically slain by the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA).

According to Ashe (2006b,162; also Ruddick 1989), it is contended that this sort of involvement was heavily influenced by femininity, since it was driven by the adoption of "female principles" such as non-violence and a natural maternal instinct to safeguard, which seemed to have motivated the establishment of the organization. Throughout their relatively brief life, the women played a vital role in fostering dialogue between Republican representatives and policymakers, while also aggressively advocating for the advancement of civil rights. However, their involvement in politics was ultimately curtailed as a result of what Hamilton Callaghan (2002, p. 35) describes as "structural inequality, including gender-related circumstances. "The motivations behind the Peace People movement in the 1970s, which exclusively consisted of women, can be attributed to a shared response to the tragic deaths of three children. Additionally, their actions were guided by a set of ideas that can be seen as a prominent manifestation of traditional maternal values (McWilliams, 1995; Ashe, 2006a). According to Alison (2004), a minority of women were also involved in paramilitary activities. Within Republican circles, it is notable that women were engaged in acts of violence from an early stage, and those women who actively participated in protests often played a key role in mobilizing community resistance within nationalist enclaves.

As an integral component of the armed forces' campaign aimed at expelling Britain from Ireland, Republican women were actively involved in carrying out acts of violence like as assassinations and bombings, in addition to fulfilling other assigned duties. Female combatants affiliated with the Republican faction had a higher level of military involvement compared to their male counterparts who aligned with the Loyalist faction. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that a portion of the male Loyalists did enlist in the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), which operated as a paramilitary organization. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the involvement of women in warfare often underwent a process of feminization, as both men and women tended to associate female combatants with traditional feminine qualities. These women strategically utilised their femininity and its associated connotations to their benefit, such as by concealing or carrying weapons on their person, and by exploiting the hesitancy of security forces to search women. During a conversation, an individual openly shared their experience of manoeuvring around Belfast City Centre while discreetly carrying firearms within a baby's pram, asserting that the process was straightforward. (Dialogue, April 2006) The security personnel did not perceive women and children as being a threat.

Although they were actively involved, their intention to exert a substantial influence as males inside the paramilitary organisation was limited (Buckley, 1993; Morgan, 1996), partly due to the imposition of restrictions on their ability to engage

in specific activities. At the outset, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) implemented a policy that disallowed the involvement of women in combat activities. The prevailing societal convention underwent a protracted process of contestation due to women's advocacy for reform and the recognition of the potential strategic advantages in leveraging femininity inside military campaigns. Nevertheless, gender inequalities remained prevalent within the context of armed republicanism. Specifically, in 1981, female detainees in Northern Ireland were deliberately banned from participating in the hunger strikes, which tragically led to the deaths of ten male prisoners. The topic of discussion pertains to the interplay between location, sexuality, and culture, specifically in the context of the number 349. The material was obtained by Ulster University located in Coleraine. On August 13, 2008, at 12:10 p.m., a demonstration advocating for political status took place at the Maze Prison. Based on a study conducted in West Belfast by Dowler (1998), it was found that Republican women residing in Northern Ireland saw a lack of acknowledgement from men about their contributions to the struggle, which they believed persisted even in times of "peacetime."

"The individuals who actively engaged in the research interviews expressed feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction with the absence of their experiences inside the Republican culture. The scholars engaged in a discourse of Republican themes that consistently downplayed the challenges faced by women and highlighted instances of inequality, such as formal prisoner houses and homecoming receptions. According to Dowler (1998), there existed a sense of social togetherness in Republican West Belfast, even as late as 1998, around four years into the peace process, notwithstanding the exclusion experienced by two men as a result of sexual offences. Racioppi and O'Sullivan See (2001) argue that a gender regime favouring men over women has endured across various domains within Northern Ireland's post-conflict society. This study will now examine the physical landscape of commemoration in the context of its governing structure.

### **Conclusion**

It is possible to argue, in a more general sense, that the act of commemorating the difficulties that were encountered during the post-war/peacetime era is appropriate. This would be an interpretation of the phrase. Northern Ireland's gender identities are a product of nearly three decades' worth of bloodshed caused by ethnonationalists. These identities have become firmly established and widely distributed throughout the society as a result of the violence caused by these ideologies. It's possible that the different things that men and women went through in their lives helped define the responsibilities they took on after the war. The influence that the combatants had on the scope, magnitude, and nature of the fight resulted in a substantial impact on the collective memory of the general public about the public spaces in the region. This impact was caused by the conflict. The end result is an emotive portrayal of the setting that acknowledges the narratives of the male participants, while at the same time including and questioning the different competing opinions of individuals, with a special emphasis on the largely female community. This was accomplished by focusing on how the environment affects the majority of the population. In addition,



rather than merely describing contemporary social ties, the manifestation of these narratives actively engages in them, disrupts them, and modifies them. The public discourse and depiction of issues continue to reflect an obvious male bias, which is in direct violation of the principles specified in the Agreement. This is the case despite the persistent efforts made by women to combat gender stereotypes and transcend the constraints imposed on them by their previous experiences.

In the context of the Northern Ireland Troubles, women played both overt and covert roles; despite this, their contributions have not been fully accepted in practise, particularly not by the male persons who are responsible for moulding communal memory. In the course of history, there has been a pattern of giving precedence, both in terms of storytelling and in terms of societal concerns, to male stories and to political conflict. In light of the historically discriminatory treatment of women, it is of the utmost importance to investigate the roles that women can play in today's society. According to Onyejekwe (2005), cultural systems that have a tendency to exclude women from the process of conflict resolution also show a noticeable tendency to restrict women's participation in important positions during times of conflict and place restrictions on the participation of women during those periods. This argument is supported by the findings of Ward (2004), who proposes that the persistent difference in gender representation during times of peace poses a considerable barrier to the achievement of a harmonious and communal future. This finding lends credence to the aforementioned assertion. The recent progress made in the peace process in Northern Ireland has brought attention to the possibility of the subject of gender equality making a comeback in the near future. In spite of this, there is still a degree of doubt regarding the degree to which two male individuals would be accorded major responsibility within this political climate that is always shifting.

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