



# Reading 1916

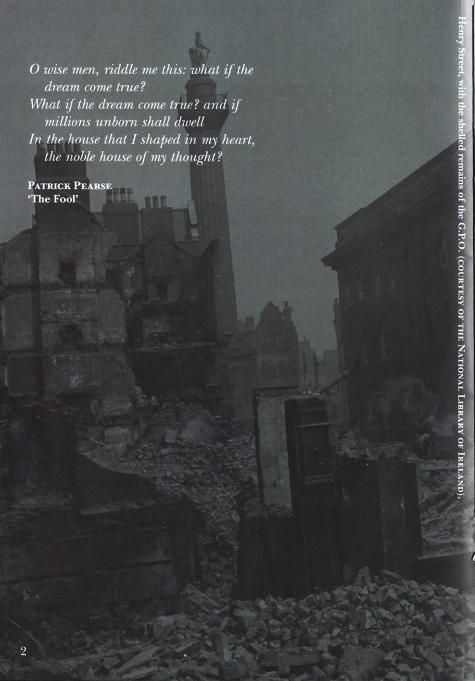
*I write it out in a verse—  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born*

W.B. YEATS  
'Easter, 1916'

Exhibition  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS  
READING ROOM



Leabharlann UCD  
UCD Library



*O wise men, riddle me this: what if the  
dream come true?*

*What if the dream come true? and if  
millions unborn shall dwell*

*In the house that I shaped in my heart,  
the noble house of my thought?*

**PATRICK PEARSE**

**'The Fool'**

The Easter Rising was a formative event, not only for Ireland's political future but for her cultural identity too. University College Dublin was closely associated with the movements for social and political change that emerged during the early part of the twentieth century, and many staff and students were actively involved in the affairs of Easter Week. For Irish writers, both at the time and since, these events have held a strong imaginative charge. From idealised possibility to stark reality, the Rising has helped to shape how Ireland's identity is read in text and image – through its literature, journalism and popular culture. This exhibition explores the circulation of printed texts in this period, tracing links between memoirs and poems, personal accounts and political reflections, reportage and commemorative printing. Seen together, these materials reveal the important role played by the printed word in this time of cultural and political revolution.

## *Reading* 1916

Curator: Dr Lucy Collins, UCD School of English, Drama and Film

NO. 9 SECOND YEAR

# A BROADSIDE

FOR FEBRUAY, 1910.  
PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY E. C. YEATS AT THE CUALA PRESS,  
CHURCHTOWN, DUNDRUM, COUNTY DUBLIN.  
SUBSCRIPTION TWELVE SHILLINGS A YEAR POST FREE.



## LAMENT FOR THE DEATH OF GOŠAN RUADŪ UA NÉIL COMMONLY CALLED OWEN ROE O'NEIL.

Time— 10th Nov., 1849. Scene— Ormeau's Camp, County  
Waterford. Speakers— A Veteran of Owen O'Neil  
one of the horsemen, just arrived with an account of

\*Did they dare, did they dare to slay Owen Roe O'Neil  
\*Yes, they slew with poison him they feared to meet  
\*May God wither an herb that may their blood be  
\*May the poison that he died on poison Owen

... again the bitter  
... hatched to murder  
... on his way,  
... Leonard's Day

Vail, vail ye far of  
—with ashes stre  
ply we deplore I  
er see his grave,

## THE IRISH REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF IRISH  
LITERATURE, ART & SCIENCE

MARCH 1911

ART PLATE  
The Fairy Ring—*Wm. O'Connell*  
A. WYLLIE  
George Moore  
ESSAYS  
George W. Russell  
CLASSIC LITERATURE  
T. H. Power

POETRY  
Patrick O'Connell  
James Spence  
Thomas MacDonagh  
PROSE—FICTION & CRITICISM  
John Galsworthy  
Laurie R. King  
May C. Smith  
REVIEWS

DUBLIN  
THE IRISH REVIEW PUBLISHING COMPANY  
10, SOUTH LONDON STREET, DUBLIN

## THE FAIRY CHANGING AND OTHER POEMS BY DORA SIGERSON WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY COLLETTA

—HARVARD  
—UNIVERSITY PRESS  
—CAMBRIDGE



Main image: O'Connell Bridge and Street, 1916 (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND).  
1. Cuala Broadside, February 1910; 2. *The Irish Review*, March 1911; 3. Dora Sigerson, *The Fairy Changing*, 1898.

## Revolution in Print: The Irish Cultural Revival

The early twentieth century was a time of extraordinary cultural change in Ireland, especially in the literary arts. The Irish Revival, which began in earnest in the 1890s, transformed the literary and artistic landscape; its conjunction of creative achievement and intense cultural debate was the crucible for work by W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge, as well as for many other texts in Irish and English. Yeats was one of the founders of the Abbey Theatre; it aimed to promote the work of Irish playwrights and became an important focus of collaboration in the performing and visual arts. Yeats also supported his sisters' Cuala Press, which produced hand-printed texts illustrated by key Irish artists. Yeats was involved in a number of publishing enterprises during this time and became acutely aware of the power of print to combine political and artistic aims.

In only a few cases were those involved in the cultural revival also politically active. There were key points of connection, however: a number of the rebel leaders were published poets, and participated directly in the literary revival. Patrick Pearse was a committed member of the Gaelic League and served, for a time, as editor of its newspaper *An Claidheamh Soluis*. Though he would later be identified with the idea of blood sacrifice, his writings reveal a more complex character, and help to chart the growth of his political convictions. One of the publications in which Pearse's work appeared was the *Irish Review*, edited by his friend Thomas MacDonagh. A lecturer in English at University College Dublin, MacDonagh was a late addition to the rebel leadership. His writings show both his dedication as an educator and his complex attitude towards revolutionary nationalism.

Literary journals became a key part of the larger cultural revival. As well as providing a forum for the production of new writing, these publishing enterprises emphasised the important role of journalism as a medium for the dissemination of political ideas. The newspapers and periodicals of the time also reflected a variety of creative and ideological positions. These publications were significant in propagating ideas of cultural and political independence before the Easter Rising, and in shaping public understanding of those events both at the time and in subsequent decades.

Main image: View of damaged city from the top of Nelson's Pillar (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND).  
1. James Connolly, *The Reconquest of Ireland*, 1915; 2. *The Sinn Féin Revolt Illustrated*, 1917; 3. postcard of Dublin, 1916.

# The "Sinn Féin" REVOLT

## ILLUSTRATED

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ACME WORKS, DUBLIN.

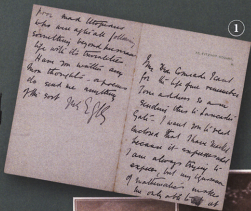
PRICE ONE SHILLING.



## Representing the Rising: Easter Week, 1916

The decision to use the Great War as an opportunity to resist British rule was taken by the Irish Volunteers in 1914, but the split in that organisation left Eoin MacNeill as Chief of Staff of the rebel army. MacNeill was not a military figure, however, and when he learned of the plans for armed insurrection in the spring of 1916, he issued a countermanding order. This was published in Irish newspapers on 23 April. Key figures among the IRB leadership decided to ignore this instruction, and roused Volunteers from their beds on the morning of Easter Monday. These haphazard beginnings are recorded in the diaries and memoirs of the time, as well as in the work of a number of important writers. Early in *The Insurrection in Ireland*, James Stephens notes his surprised discovery of the beginnings of armed conflict, and Austin Clarke, in his memoir, recalls his curiosity concerning the confused events in the city on Easter Monday. These uncertainties were also turned to creative account by Pádraic Ó Conaire, whose *Seacht mBua an Eirí Amach* was first published by Maunsel Press in 1917. 'M'Fhile Caol Dubh', among the most memorable of these stories, tells of a marriage fractured by the wife's fear for the safety of a rebel poet, her lover. Views on the Rising were closely linked to the personal circumstances of both participants and observers. Lady Cynthia Asquith, for example, placed these events in an international perspective in her diaries.

In keeping with the importance of drama within the revivalist movement, the Rising itself had a theatrical quality. Many of the strategies adopted by the rebels were symbolically important and sought to place them in the revolutionary tradition of Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone. The choice of the General Post Office as the rebel headquarters enabled the insurgents to control the communication networks, and international news agencies worldwide reported on events in Dublin. Pictorial features revealed the devastated landscapes of Sackville Street and other key sites in the city centre, often reading these events within the context of First World War politics. The broad thoroughfare outside the GPO offered an appropriate stage for the reading of the Proclamation, which had been produced secretly in Dublin in the days before the Rising. A shortage of type meant it had to be printed in two stages – first the top half of the paper, then the bottom – and different fonts had to be used for typesetting. Though Pearse's declaration of a Republic generated limited interest among bystanders, it was to become an important moment in the articulation of Ireland's independent identity. Pearse's role as educator, language activist and poet, would become central to how the story of the Rising was told.



Main image: O'Connell Street between Abbey Street and North Earl Street (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND). 1. Eva Gore-Booth letter (undated); 2. Eva Gore-Booth; 3. Constance Markievicz; 4. First World War recruitment poster (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND).

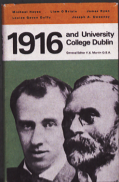


## Aftermath: Changing Views on War and Revolution

The execution of the rebel leaders within weeks of the Rising had a powerful impact on public opinion. Many who had strongly opposed the revolution now began to see the heroism of the participants, and they were widely commemorated by memorial cards and keepsakes, as well as in verse. Returning to Dublin after fighting in Gallipoli, poet Francis Ledwidge was moved to learn of the uprising – his elegy for his friend Thomas MacDonagh would become among the most well known dedicatory poems of the period. Even those who did not witness events first hand were inspired to write about them. Yeats was in England at the time of the Easter Rising but his response to it was intense: 'I had no idea that any public event could so deeply move me,' he wrote to Lady Gregory, '- & I am very despondent about the future'. Yeats began working on his poem within months of the rebellion and, though it is the most famous representation of the Rising, it shows the poet's deep ambivalence about the events of Easter Week. Maud Gonne was among the first to recognise these mixed feelings, and she wrote of her disappointment at Yeats's failure to acknowledge the heroism of the rebels. Though Yeats considered placing the poem – then titled just '1916' – at the opening of his next volume, he decided instead to print it privately with Clement Shorter in London, for immediate circulation among his friends. In 1920 the poem was published in the *New Statesman* and in the *Dial*, and appeared in Yeats's *Cuala* volume, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*.

Yeats's childhood friend, Constance Markievicz, is depicted in 'Easter, 1916', and she appears too in the work of her sister, Eva Gore-Booth. Both women had rejected a privileged upbringing in favour of political activism, but Gore-Booth was a pacifist and social reformer, opposed both to revolutionary and state-sponsored violence. In spite of their differences, the two sisters shared a close personal bond that is expressed in their writings. Gore-Booth was living in England at the time of the Rising, and her letters shed interesting light on her visits to Ireland after the execution of the leading rebels. Though Markievicz was a key revolutionary figure, the important part played by women in the Rising would largely be obscured in the years that followed. Members of *Cumann na mBan* were vital at the preparatory stages and served in all but one of the rebel strongholds during Easter week. These women performed active roles in combat and functioned as scouts and despatch-riders, bringing information to garrisons around the city. Though their contribution took some time to come to light, the experiences of these women formed an important dimension of the narrative of independent Ireland.

Main image: Ruins of Freeman Press and Telegraph, 1916 (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND). 1. F. X. Martin, ed., *1916 and University College Dublin*, 1966; 2. Lia Mills, *Fallen*, 2015; 3. 'In Memoriam Padraig Mac Parais', musical score by Arnold Bax; 4. Liam O'Flaherty, *Insurrection*, 1950.



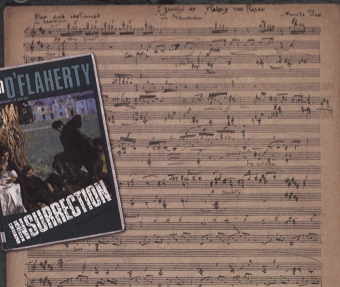
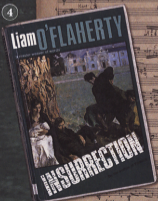
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## Legacies: Remembering the Rising

In the period following the establishment of the Free State in 1922, the Easter Rising came to be seen as the foundation of modern Irish identity. The story of the nation, as well as of individuals and their families, became closely linked to these events and to the values of heroism and sacrifice that were so central to the writing of the time. Personal memoirs sought to capture revolutionary experience, or to reflect on the role of family members in the events of Easter Week. The published writings of those who died were gathered and anthologised both in Ireland and abroad, reinforcing the literary underpinnings of this as a “poets’ revolution”. Creative responses, both in music and the visual arts, continued throughout the century. In popular culture, too, the rebels lived on – ballads and songs commemorated their lives and deeds; postcards made their faces known to later generations. The memorialisation of these figures was an important part of modern Irish print culture, which often reflected directly on the effects of this narrative on modern Ireland.

DR LUCY COLLINS

UCD School of English, Drama and Film

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*Alas the bugles on the distant plain –  
The guns break forth with their insistent din,  
The dews of noon-day leave a crimson stain  
On grass, that all men's feet must wander in.*

**EVA GORE-BOOTH**  
**'1916'**

Abbey Street Corner and the remains of the DBC Building after the Rising (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND).

## FURTHER READING

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*He shall not hear the bitter cry  
In the wild sky, where he is lain,  
Nor voices of the sweeter birds  
Above the wailing of the rain.*

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE  
'Thomas MacDonagh'

O'Connell Street (COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND).  
Opposite — Map of Dublin, *Sinn Féin Rebellion Handbook*, 1917



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