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'Then what a rough and riotous charge have you / to lead those that the Devil cannot rule'. If according to the Oxford English Dictionary to run riot is 'to act without restraint or control', can riots ever be led by a particular person or small group? Discuss at least two performances of 'rough and riotous' behaviour, either onstage or off, in constructing your answer.

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In this essay I will explore three examples of 'rough and riotous behaviour' related to the 1916 Easter Rising. Nationalist, republican, and constitutional politics play a key part in the understanding of an Irish audience for all these performances, and I will therefore refer to political groups and movements frequently in order to most precisely and holistically analyse the implication of the types of leadership employed in my examples. The three examples I will approach are the leadership of the Easter Rising itself, the presentation of that leadership in Sean O'Casey's 1926 play *The Plough and the Stars*, and the leadership of the riot in the Abbey Theatre provoked by that play on 11th February 1926. Easter Week 1916 is a riot with performative qualities; *The Plough and the Stars* is a performance that portrays riot; and the 11th February disturbance is a riot in a performance space. These categories clearly both have much in common and are distinct from one another, and performances of leadership may productively be examined across all three because of the overlap of symbolism, behaviour and ideology between them. As such, I will use the contrasts between the 'real' riot of Easter 1916 and the 'theatrical' riot of Easter 1916 as portrayed by O'Casey in 1926 to explore how the leadership model enacted by James Connolly and Padraic Pearse can be problematized. Subsequently, I will argue that in the riot during O'Casey's play, the leadership of Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Margaret Pearse was heavily shadowed by Padraic Pearse and James Connolly. The appropriation of Pearse and the other Rising martyrs suggests that riots may be led by a 'person or small group' but also by the majority's perception of such a person, a perception heavily but selectively influenced by their performance of leadership.

In the Easter Rising of 1916, the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) and Irish Volunteers typically wore militaristic uniforms, evoking the soldiers in the trenches through costume. Their coats were green, in contrast to what the ICA's General James Connolly had previously described as 'the red coats of our hated assassins', marking the nationalists as people of the 'Emerald Isle'.[1] By rioting, the insurrectionists performed a 'heroism' that contrasted with the 'heroes' fighting in the trenches for the British. Kershaw argues that 'to achieve […] cultural resonance, [protests] must develop dramaturgies that draw on tradition to produce a recognisably *ordered* cultural performance, whilst never foreclosing […] on the potential for *disorder*'.[2] Appropriating red uniforms associated with military control claims agency for

[1] James Connolly, 'The Fighting Race', in *Collected Works*, 1898 (Dublin: New Books, 1987), p. 33, quoted in Gregory Dobbins, 'Whenever Green is Red: James Connolly and Postcolonial Theory', *Nepantla, Views from South*, 1 (Autumn 2000): 640.
[2] Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 99 (author's italics).

Ireland, before a shot has been fired, by reappropriating a symbol of oppression, the military. Equally, the very idea of uniformity imposes convention on the Rising and creates hierarchies of rank and expectations of orders.[3] An even stronger example of performative costuming is shown in the Irish soldier whose mother burned his British uniform when he joined the rebels.[4] Given the influence of Catholicism on the Rising, which will be discussed later, burning a British uniform performs an almost sacrificial ritual of destruction, evoking Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:38), in which sacrificial fire both connotes political action against the state and purification of a sacred site. Endowing the uniform of an ordinary rank and file soldier with such symbolic significance shows the performativity of ordinary members of the Rising, and leads to questions of how their leaders interacted with this investment in symbolism in those they led.

Kershaw focuses heavily on group behaviour but his analysis does not extend to an exploration of who controls insurrectionary groups, and how. Whilst, according to Fearghal McGarry, members of the Volunteers and ICA were largely unconscious of trying to create themselves as sacrificial figures in popular consciousness,[5] the ICA General, James Connolly, and Irish Volunteers leader, Padraic Pearse, almost always had this aim in mind. The Proclamation of the Republic, written and performed by Pearse and Connolly, is one example of performative leadership. In a nation that had waited for the passing of the Home Rule bill for decades,[6] the Proclamation appeared to achieve independence instantaneously, whilst maintaining the formality of a legal document through the phrases 'we declare the rights of the people of Ireland', and 'the Provisional Government, hereby constituted'.[7] The act of proclaiming a republic is, in Kershaw's terms, an aesthetic sign which symbolises conflict rather than literally enacting it.[8] It creates an image of a republic, through the words of the proclamation and the voice of Pearse, the revolutionary leader, but does not literally separate Ireland from English Rule. Whilst Kershaw discusses how aesthetic acts of riot are useful in the mediatised, globalised world, for Pearse and Connolly this aesthetic performance was to a localised audience: the people of Dublin in Easter Week 1916.[9] Their use of symbolism, therefore, is heavily targeted, evoking legal bills because of the high profile importance of the Home Rule bill and utilising military uniforms because of the constant presence of trenches in public consciousness.[10] This shows that Kershaw's assessment of riot as performative is not as specific to the later twentieth century as his focus on mediatisation and globalisation suggests.

The language of the Proclamation brings together the disparate ideologies of Pearse and Connolly. Addressed to 'Irishmen and Irishwomen', and stating the new republic to be 'oblivious to the differences carefully fostered by an alien government which have divided a minority from the majority in the past', it proposes egalitarian, postcolonial, attitudes to social change. Connolly's performance is not only aesthetic, but also creates actual shifts in the micro-society created behind its barricades. ICA women participated actively in the Rising, carrying dangerous messages across the city.[11] This shows a riotous leadership which directs the performance of a new society, enacting the kind of 'real' consequence that

[3] Fearghal McGarry, *Rising: Easter 1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 2.
[4] Ibid., p. 126.
[5] Ibid., pp. 153-55.
[6] Ibid., p. 15.
[7] 'The Proclamation of the Republic', 1916, reproduced in Clair Wills, *Dublin 1916* (London: Palantino, 2009), frontispiece.
[8] Kershaw, p. 100.
[9] Ibid., pp. 5, 19, 92.
[10] Wills, p. 11.
[11] McGarry, p. 153.

Kershaw discusses in relation to the violence of the French student riots some fifty years later.[12]

In contrast, phrases within the Proclamation such as 'valour and discipline' and 'readiness of [Ireland's] children to sacrifice themselves' are representative of the 'spirit of chivalry and self-sacrifice' that Pearse considered intrinsic to Irish identity.[13] Pearse saw great potential for positive exchange between militant Irish mythology, such as the hero Cuchulainn, and the cult of the Virgin Mother and the crucified Christ. This focus on iconic heroes led him to a dramaturgy of radical leadership in which the creation of almost ritual imagery, similar to the burnt British uniform, was paramount over actions to incite concrete change. Pearse 'wore an ancient sword through much of the urban guerrilla confrontation', which, from a performance perspective, functions in the opposite way to green military coats.[14] Clearly useless against machine gun bullets, ancient weaponry uses the conventions of previous riots, even after their usefulness is exhausted. Pearse seeks legitimacy from historical figures, particularly previous Irish revolutionaries Wolfe Tomes and Robert Emmett, who, McGarry notes, most Irish Catholic homes displayed pictures of in the early twentieth century. Hence, Pearse's technique of leadership, whilst it may not have been strong from the perspective of military tactics, collected much popular support.[15]

Therefore, where Connolly's primary concern is to create a socialist Irish republic, Pearse was an 'exponent…of a romantic morality which sanctioned […] sacrifice'.[16] The two leaders are working from profoundly different scripts and are thus clear examples of the type of fracture and dissonance Kershaw expects to see within groups of protesters.[17] The combination of Connolly's pragmatism and Pearse's aestheticism achieved a result of inciting excitement and enacting practical change that neither could have achieved alone, and thus their joint performances of leadership during the Easter Rising both organised and disordered its performance as a whole.

By 1926, when *The Plough and the Stars* was first staged at the Abbey Theatre, memory of the Rising had become dominated by Catholic ritual.[18] 1916 anniversary ceremonies included recitations of the Rosary;[19] pictures of Connolly and Pearse showed them with haloes; and a new edition of Pearse's poems was published which included a disclaimer informing readers that the Gaelic hero Cuchulainn would not feature.[20] As a result, a new understanding of Pearse grew in popular consciousness. Those remembering the Rising were not remembering the exact Pearse who read the socialist inflected proclamation of 1916 and integrated ancient Irish heroes into his performance of leadership. Complexities expunged from his character, Pearse became exclusively a Catholic martyr.

In *The Plough and the Stars,* a third incarnation of Pearse is created in the form of The Speaker. This character, whose words are taken from Pearse's writing,[21] is only ever visible as a silhouette, to the side of a pub scene. James Moran notes that this visual inversion of the usual radiant portraits distances Pearse from Christological symbolism.[22] Inverting Catholic symbolism also reduces Pearse's heroic status more widely. The language of The Speaker links 'war' to 'the angels of God!' (p. 191) and therefore when the saintly image of Pearse is visually debunked, his heroic status is also problematized. The historic Pearse

[12] Kershaw, p. 100.
[13] Padraic Pearse, quoted in Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: the Triumph of Failure* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 116.
[14] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London, Jonathon Cape, 1995), p. 224.
[15] McGarry, p. 36.
[16] Edwards, p. 222.
[17] Kershaw, pp. 98-99.
[18] James Moran, *Staging the Easter Rising: 1916 as Theatre* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), p. 9.
[19] Ibid., p. 37.
[20] Ibid., p. 42.
[21] Ibid., p. 44.
[22] Ibid., pp. 47-48.

united Christology and militant heroism in his own philosophy, according to Thompson: 'if it is hard to see Cuchulainn, riding in his chariots with the severed heads of his enemies about him, as a Christ-like figure, we must look again, because Pearse certainly did'.[23] However, O'Casey, like the posthumous publishers of Pearse's poetry, uses explicitly Christian language to link militancy and religion. The, as Thompson notes, more complex imaginative action required to link 'severed heads' to Christ is erased from the rhetoric. Kiberd suggests that this is a reduction on O'Casey's part of the true complexity of Pearse's ideology.[24] I would add that this reduction of complexity shows the leadership tactics of The Speaker have been heavily influenced by commemorations of the historical Pearse after his death.

Pearse's messianic image is also inverted through the character of Rosie Redmond. Rosie trivialises militant rebels, for example when she observes 'they're in a holy mood' (p. 182) and 'it's heartbreakin' to see a young fella thinkin' of anything or admirin' anything, but silk thransparent stockings showing off […] a little lassie's leg' (p. 186). Both 'mood' and the equation of political ideology with casual, fleeting sexual desire diminish the gravity of the Speaker by questioning the longevity of his power. Rosie's language implies flimsiness too. 'Silk' and 'thransparent' both suggest something delicate and aesthetic that was made for appreciation, not function. This has implications for the fleeting nature of the Rising, and Pearse's aesthetic posturing within it. It is also possible to link Rosie's interest in the costuming of sexuality with the rebel's interest in military costuming. If Rosie's attention to silk and transparency is superficial, Pearse's attention to useless swords must be similarly questionable.

Because Rosie is visible, she seems to be given higher status than Pearse. Since naturalism is a form built for the psychological investigation of individuals, it cannot portray the group mentalities and powerful mass reactions to Pearse's leadership that prevent his flamboyant use of aesthetic symbolism from being ridiculous. So, Raymond Williams argues, Rosie appears to be the privileged character at this point (if not explicitly a leader), because the form dictates she must be.[25] Rosie undermines Pearse because she is a literalisation of the human in the face of the ideological. She is corporeal desire, not elevated abstraction, physical presence, not a voice from offstage, naturalism, neither folktale, nor Biblical writing. O'Casey has chosen a form, and cast Rosie as its emissary, that can only show the Rising as inadequate, because it is an inadequate form for showing the Rising. In an analysis of Pearse's performance of leadership, this is a vital point, because it shows that although O'Casey uses the 'real' words of Pearse, he is unable to show him onstage as he was shown on the 'stage' of O'Connell Street ten years before. Kiberd argues that 'the Rising hardly needed to be theatricalised; it simply needed to be transferred from street to stage', but transferring a leader into the theatre is always a mediation, heavily influenced by artistic form and the understanding derived from context.

During Easter Week 1916 Pearse performed Irish independence, but in February 1926 it was problematic to depict that performance using a naturalistic dramatic form. The Abbey Theatre rests on a continuum between these two; it is not as tightly bound by forms as a fictional work of writing, but nor is it as broad and open to the outside influence of public intervention as the public space of the General Post Office (GPO). In 1926, the Abbey Theatre had received state subsidy for less than a year, so questions surrounding the meaning

[23] William Irwin Thompson, *The Imagination of an Insurrection: Dublin, Easter 1916.* 1967 (Massachusetts: Lindisfarne Press, 1982), p. 121.
[24] Kiberd, p. 227.
[25] Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London, Hogarth Press, 1993), quoted in Ronan McDonald, 'Sean O'Casey's Dublin Trilogy: Disillusionment to Delusion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Irish Drama*, ed. Shaun Richards (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 138.

of 'national theatre' in Ireland were still subject to challenge and debate, just as issues of what it meant to be 'Irish' were undergoing emotionally charged scrutiny in the streets outside.[26] Lionel Pilkington observes that tension about the function of a national theatre existed between the directors of the Abbey Theatre, who believed that national theatre should challenge majority perspectives, and nationalist public figures, dating back to James Connolly himself, who argued that a national theatre should express the previously unarticulated views of the majority.[27]

In *The Plough*, the women of the tenements are portrayed as superior to the men who fight, but the martyred wives, sisters and mothers of those men deem this particular privileging of women unacceptable and so forcibly perform their own version of what it means to privilege the women of 1916. After coal and coins had been thrown onto the stage in Act II,[28] the managers of the Abbey raised the houselights and four women connected to Rising martyrs became visible (Kathleen Clarke, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, Fiona Plunkett and Margaret Pearse).[29] Evidently, the houselights did not exclusively illuminate these women, they made the entire audience visible, but Moran lists these four in particular almost as if they were spot-lit. In this way, Moran shows how these women were the focus of attention from other audience members, because of their privileged position as family of leaders of the Rising.

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington shouted: 'The Free State Government is subsidising the Abbey to malign Pearse and Connolly'.[30] In mentioning the recently granted subsidy, Easter Week is linked to the debate over the function of a national theatre. This both highlights the relationship between stage and street that O'Casey uses when he portrays Padraic Pearse as the Speaker, and suggests that Pearse and Connolly are central to the debate over the function of national theatre. The simplistic cause and effect balance of 'Subsidising the Abbey to malign Pearse and Connolly' almost implies that the Abbey has been specifically subsidised to malign Rising martyrs to the exclusion of all other aims. Furthermore, by breaking the 'decorous[ly] silen[t]' conventions of the Abbey, Sheehy Skeffington claims the right to propose an alternative version of national Irish theatre, and through her mention of Pearse and Connolly, coupled with the shared characteristic amongst she and her fellow leaders of familial connection to Rising martyrs, makes the Rising a significant source of her authority.[31]

Elsewhere, Sheehy Skeffington argued that 'the women of Easter Week are typified in […] in the mother of Padraic Pearse', who was also present.[32] Similar to her son during the Rising, Margaret's protest was chiefly symbolic; seating her in the audience so that she would be visible to other audience members and inspire their riotous behaviour requires no action from Pearce herself. Carmel Farrelly argues it is surprising that Sheehy Skeffington would choose to 'typify' the women of the Rising as someone, 'however worthy, whose involvement was based solely on her relationship to male participants', highlighting how this foregrounding of martyrs in one way diminishes the leadership role of the women themselves.[33] By placing themselves in bright light, as the Easter Rising martyrs often were portrayed, not only Margaret Pearse, but also Plunkett, Sheehy Skeffington and Clarke made themselves signifiers, standing in for the martyrs of Easter Week. In order to incite a similar kind of riotous behaviour to that of O'Connell Street in 1916, they, like O'Casey gave a

[26] Lionel Pilkington, 'The Abbey Theatre and the Irish State', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Irish Drama*, ed. Shaun Richards (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 237.
[27] Pilkington, pp. 231-34.
[28] Moran, p. 44.
[29] Ibid., p. 49.
[30] Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, quoted in Moran, p. 49.
[31] Pilkington, p. 232.
[32] Moran, p. 48.
[33] Carmel Farrelly, 'Reconfiguring History', *Irish Review*, 22 (Summer, 1998): 132.

performance influenced by the heavenly light that featured in portrayals of the martyrs that emerged after their deaths. Discarding for this essay the important question of feminist readings of the Rising and its aftermath, I want to focus on the implications of continuing reliance on the authority of Rising leaders for riotous leadership in 1926. Moran describes the Abbey riot as 'a relatively well-organised protest', but the reason that its organisation appears to function is through reliance on the authority of protest leaders from ten years before.[34] This suggests that it is not Pearse and Connolly in person who 'lead those that the Devil cannot rule', but rather that riots are led by the perception the rioters hold of their leaders, and that even in the absence of that leader, perceptions can continue to hold meaning, and can even evolve, develop and digress until new leaders are created from the originals.

In conclusion, manifestations of Irish riotous leadership show that performing leadership can work to both to create conventions within riots, as through the Proclamation of the Republic; and to spark unconventional behaviour, such as coal in the theatre. It has also shown that the form of a riotous performance influences how it portrays leadership, whether that is through symbolism, the constraints of naturalism, or beginning to instigate social change behind a barricade. Overall, the interactions between these discussions of Pearse, Connolly, the Speaker, and the women in the Abbey Theatre are evidence that performances of leadership are plastic and that the riots associated with the Easter Rising were as closely influenced, controlled and disrupted by public perceptions of leadership as by the performances of the leaders themselves.

[34] Moran, p. 39.

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