

Terror and Violence in the Irish War of Independence: A Case Study in The Shadow of a Gunman by Sean O'Casey.

Ouattara DRAMANE

Department of English,

University Felix Houphouët Boigny of Cocody, Cote d'Ivoire

Auteur correspondant : ouattarabdoul@yahoo.fr, Phone : +2250505561161 / +2250747678874

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Abstract: The paper intends to investigate the context of the Irish War in connection with the deterioration of people's living conditions. In (1922) Dublin City became the battlefield when war broke out between the Irish Republican guerrillas and the British forces in Ireland. In the chaotic situation of the war, civilians and innocent were frequently ambushed. Thereby, viewed from a sociocritical approach, the major focus of the paper is to analyze the social dimension of the societal problems caused by the Irish War. And regarding the atrocities of this war, Sean O'Casey's portrayal of Dublin's ongoing chaotic situation in *The Shadow of a Gunman* remains relevant to apprehend the unsaid motivations of this war. Being physically powerless, psychologically disturbed, and downcast, O'Casey's tenement dwellers had to cope with the hardships of their critical situation. Like Minnie Powell in the play, innocent Irish were exposed to violence, and trapped in mass bombardments.

Keywords: British army, IRA, mass bombardment, residents, shooting.

Terreur et violence dans la guerre d'indépendance irlandaise : Une étude de cas dans The Shadow of a Gunman de Sean O'Casey

Résumé : Le document a pour but d'examiner le contexte de la guerre d'Irlande en relation avec la détérioration des conditions de vie humaine. En (1922) la ville de Dublin est devenue le champ de bataille lorsque la guerre éclata entre la guérilla républicaine irlandaise et les forces britanniques en Irlande. Dans la situation chaotique de la guerre, les civils et les populations innocentes étaient fréquemment pris en embuscade. Et vu d'un point de vue sociocritique, le principal objectif du document est d'analyser la dimension sociale des problèmes sociétaux causés par la guerre d'Indépendance d'Irlande. En relation avec les atrocités cette guerre, le portrait fait par Sean O'Casey de la situation chaotique de Dublin dans *The Shadow of a Gunman* demeure pertinent pour appréhender les non-dits de cette guerre. Étant

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physiquement impuissants, psychologiquement perturbés et déprimés, les habitants d'O'casey ont dû faire face aux difficultés de leur situation critique. Ainsi, comme Minnie Powell dans la pièce, des Irlandais innocents ont été exposés à la violence et piégés dans des bombardements massifs.

Mots clés : armée britannique, ARI, bombardement de masse, fusillade, résidents, fusillade.

Introduction

Imperialism and resistance are contradictory interchangeable words in the context of Colonialism and Independence. It is in this context of suspicion and mistrust between the British Empire, the ruler, and the Irish, the ruled that violence took on its highest expression. The world-wide interest that the Irish War of Independence gained through time and history, justified the need to question the outline of the British Empire's war against Irish Republicans. Recently, regarding the stake of the Irish War Michael Hopkinson (2002, Intro) makes this remark and writes that "the Irish War of Independence has provoked a massive amount of interest...and the reasons for the undying fascination [for the Irish war] are readily apparent". Scholars and critics wrote and continue debating on what has become *The Irish War of Independence* (2002). In this way, *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1925) by Sean O'Casey is a telling expression of the concern academics still devote to Irish people and their conflict with the British Empire.

O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman* stands as the echo of atrocities and violent harassment that people, particularly Irish civilians underwent in Dublin in (1923). In analyzing the Irish War atmosphere in O'Casey's play, M. Hopkinson argues " There was nothing inevitable about the gradual escalation of the conflict, which by the autumn of 1920 consisted of hostilities" (37). Similarly, Sean William Gannon (2002, ix) points out that "...during the War of Independence, women and girls from all backgrounds were unprotected from fearing, witnessing, or directly suffering the violence that the conflict entailed". People were abandoned and left to their own devices.

The rage to cross the sword with the opposing camp is central to the comprehension of the oncoming confrontation between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the British Forces. In the play, O'Casey depicts the frightful atmosphere and inhuman treatment the Tenement Residents face at night and daily as well. O'Casey's characters were frequently chased by rival camps. Some were paid unexpected military visits by the British forces, others were subject to querulous questioning at gunpoint by the IRA guerrilla, whereas civilians were the victims of death threats by armed forces. In *The Shadow of a Gunman*, characters were exposed to ill-treatments of any kind. The play displays that Minnie Powell was victim of threats and constant intimidation, whereas Davoren and Mrs Grigson live in increasing anxiety as they are regularly visited by the IRA members. This psychological abuse led to a traumatic stress climate in the tenement. In connection with the catalyst events that sparked the war, Peter Hart (2003, p.63) observes, "Men of the Royal Irish had been attacked before, shot before, and killed before, as had members of the volunteers". Ireland was invaded by war, people's torture echoed in a nearby house, and nobody dared help nor complain about it. In the play, Seumas underwent brutality as he co-lived with Mrs Minnie Powell a civilian and suspected activist. The Black and Tans went through the room of Seumas, keeping him locked up quite openly, though they could not find the slightest incriminating object in his room.

As the plot in *The Shadow of a Gunman* develops, serial bombardment and killing of innocent continue and go on tirelessly. Residents adjoining Donal Davoren's Tenements were raided and then inspected from top to bottom by armed forces. Following the inordinate search of their houses, O'Casey's Gallogher and Henderson were traumatized and embarrassed in their final decision. Should they leave the tenement or stay at the mercy of military forces, knowing that they do not have somewhere to go and stay? In (act II) the dialogue between Mr. Gallogher, Mrs. Henderson at Davoren, and Mr. Gallogher's reading of the letter confirms the moral degradation of Davoren's co-dwellers. Actually,

Mr. Gallogher and Mrs. Henderson are dominated by anxiety, because "...now things have gone from bad to worse" (II.19). It is indisputable that O'Casey's portrayal of the chaos that prevails in Dublin plunges the audience into the horror and dreadful sequences of wars of independence in colonized countries tormenting the memory of the war that these events shape.

The paper focuses on the negative impact of the Irish War on Irish society and humanity as a whole. Thus, the war of independence as described in O'Casey's play, occurs as the natural call to freedom and liberation. To put it differently, through its three-party steps and its sociocritical approach, the kernel of the paper is to investigate O'Casey's depiction of terror and violence resulting from the Irish War of Independence in connection with the social dimension of human destructive attitudes towards one's fellow. It seems that human survival and the protection of basic living conditions are at the heart of the playwright's analysis of the Irish war scene. In the perspective to explore underlying elements of that war, the quest for discovering, as Hart poses "What forces or motives drove... Irish and British opponents to such heights of violence, transforming them into heroes, martyrs, and killers? (VIII) stands the main point of the study.

I. Scene of Violent Harassment at Davoren's Tenement

That O'Casey's play *The Shadow of a Gunman* displays with pinpoint accuracy "The raw physicality of violence, the ruthlessness of commitment to violence, the strangulating grip of institutional violence ..." (McLoughlin, 1982, p. 344) is rather an attempt to draw people's minds to the atrocity of the Irish War than a process to justify war cruelty and human barbarism that Irish's spirit was furrowed with sorrow. The act of atrocity rocketed the events of that ordinary day with increasing fear. It started early in the morning; May 1920 and went on "at this hour ov the night" (II.35), when Davoren heard a loud knocking at the door. From this unusual demand to make the door open forthwith; O'Casey explained that the tenement inhabitant knew that the events of this morning would go astray of their morning habits. In fact; the loud knocking foretold

bad news for Davoren personally and constituted the first step toward terror and mistreatment.

O'Casey's exploration of the harassment of Davoren and his neighbour displayed a fearful atmosphere that mixed the sound of a rapidly moving motor with the throbbing of engines. These confused sounds affected the morale of Davoren and his mates. The thirty-old man and his mates were trapped in their living place, standing up "Between Two Hells [Tommys and Tans]" (Ferriter, 2021), thereby the noisy sounds of engines were plainly heard near the house. Regarding the ceaselessness of noisy sounds, O'Casey points out that "You couldn't tell the minute a bullet up come in through one of them, through one of them, an' hit the- hit the- an' hit the" (ll.29). Thus, tenement inhabitants are seized by terror, expressing concern about the strangeness of the noise of the engines, which was immediately and repeatedly followed by a severe instruction "Put your hands up". The Tenement dweller could not attempt the least movement because not only "it is dangerous to be in and it is equally dangerous to be out" (ll. 29), but also, people may manufacture bombs nearby Davoren's Tenement.

Headed by an auxiliary, the military strategy adopted by the armed forces consists of distilling a growing frightened environment. And this horrible atmosphere weakens the tenement inhabitants' minds, damaging their moral balance. The British armed troop's tactics created the sensation of everything collapsing around Davoren and his house. It is as if Davoren's world crumbles, bringing about a tear-splittingly noisy feeling. O'Casey's people are panic-stricken because shots and ruffles on Davoren's Lane aroused souvenirs of Irish past wars. The Anglo-Irish hostilities started on the 21st of January and then grew into a generalized conflict known as the Irish War of Independence (1919- 1921). The War of Independence brought about a human and societal catastrophe in Irish society. The killing of innocent, murdering of civilians especially the slaughtering of young Irish dealt the country's fate a blow. In the exploration of the impact of the Irish War, Joe Duffy (2015, p.23) explains further, "Forty children under the age of seventeen were

killed during the Easter Rising, a week-long rebellion against British rule in Ireland. Most were innocent bystanders, children in the wrong place at the wrong time". In fact, in the British bomb drop, no children were guaranteed immunity from the bullet and bomb break. Recently, in (1922-1923) a new conflict resumed in the country, and the Irish land became implicated in what would later become the Irish Civil War. To the mind of surviving people "Both the War of Independence and the Civil War had a profound effect on Ireland... [they brought new social challenges to the forefront] civil disobedience, deliberate use of weaponry, imprisonment, guerrilla warfare (*The Irish Wars*).

The Irish wars created a rebellious society that was ceaselessly entangled in social deviancy and turned to the violence of excessive handling of arm guns. In analyzing the rebellious atmosphere that prevailed in Dublin, some war survivors witnessed that "By raising their tricolour in the centre of the main shopping area and close to Dublin's north-side slums, the rebels ensured massive human and material losses once their position was attacked" (David Fitzpatrick, 1989, p. 59-60). Further, the same rebellious environment was in force in Charles Townshend's seminal work *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion* (2005). The work focuses on the swift and negative transformation of Irish society. Especially, Townshend holds up to view how the unfolding disaster of rebelled groups deformed the Irish land, disfiguring its social fabric. O'Casey's play helps examine the scope of the use of weaponry in Irish society at war. During wartime, Davoren relates to his mates "I remember the time when you, yourself believed in nothing but the gun "(II.28). The recalling of former awful events gives a boost to the fearful commotion, which dominates the feelings of Davoren and his mates in the same way that sleeping or staying with friends in the living room results in the same painful situation. Likely, sitting up in bed as Seumas attempts to do, raises a set of issues. O'Casey's Davoren can't make up his mind on the steps he must take forward, because each step looks like the previous one. They are inefficient due to the difficulty Davoren and his mates have to cope with urgently. The

situation of the Tenement inhabitant gets worse due to the curfew-like condition that the bombardment's noisy sound leads to.

Being under the control of fearsome loudness, scenes of Davoren's moral suffering were intensified with shots including violent and continuous knocking. The appalling sounds caused by the crashing of glass and beating of doors with rifle butts echoed in neighboring houses. At Davoren's house, sound created a warlike atmosphere, which ultimately caused a loss of self-control as people are gnawed away by despair. Drawing on the damage caused by the bomb noise, Brian Hanley (2013, p. 439) asserts that "[bomb blow] caused distress and grief to many families". O'Casey description of the tenement inhabitants' trauma is quickened by a permanent echoing of fearful sounds that portends the coming of awful events on their lane. Imprisoned by their psychological fear, and racked with irritating bomb sounds, Davoren and his mates are hopeless about their lives. O'Casey puts that " [the tenement inhabitants are rather convinced] Death is here and death is there; death is busy everywhere" (II.29). Actually, Davoren and his housemates were now at the mercy of noisy and harmful sounds. They could not escape from hearing the damaging echo of the rattle, the terrible racket of engines, the breaking of doors and windows, and the unpleasant beating. Now, they are waiting disquietingly for the outcome of the previous tearing noise because Davoren's house is surrounded by overexcited, armed soldiers.

Davoren and his mates had to face troops of soldiers gathering around their house. Their living place is surrounded by armed soldiers. This war-like environment terrifies tenement dwellers because it disheartens them from going out or staying at the windows of the house. Sometimes, Seumas Shields anxiously attempts to sit up nearby the door, other times, he tries to get some words from the soldiers standing outside. Finally, the old "pedlar" turned back rapidly and respectfully stuck to his guns as heavy steps that smashed the street door were followed by an upsetting walking pace in the hall. The walking got closer and closer to their living place when Shields adopted an attitude of agonized prayer, and

Davoren fainted on the bed, both were desperately looking for a way out. But there are none. The small house suffers agonies, and the playwright notices that "There is in Davoren's face an expression that seems to indicate an eternal war between weakness and strength..." (I.3). The Tenement inhabitants are poor and defenseless people who are tortured by the powerful armed forces.

The house of Davoren experienced violent shocks. It was broken by an imposing, armed soldier, who was also the principal. The house occupant came face-to-face with the physical presence of a soldier. Once he got into the house, the soldier started to ask short and very clear questions one after the other. Dressed in a black uniform, wearing a black beret, and holding a revolver, the auxiliary's first three questions looked like imperative demands that required immediate and concise answers. He peremptorily asks two times, "Oo's 'ere? 'Oo's 'ere? followed by the embarrassing question, "Why didn't you open the door?" (II.38). The terms of the questions shed light on the army's mode of operation, and their tone shows an outlook on the expectations of the soldier. The way the auxiliary proceeded with questioning aimed at distressing the inhabitants of the tenement. The whole process was to shock their mind so that they confess to the army or give the information the troops were expecting. Because having or getting precise information during wartime is of capital importance in decision-making. It helps the opposed part to direct or redirect their action toward the accurate target. In O'Casey's play, the doors of Davoren's tenement are the scapegoat the armed forces were looking for so far.

II. Forcing and Breaking down Doors: Manhunt

In O'Casey's *The Shadow of a Gunman*, the project of the manhunt revolves around several military strategies combined with special well-rounded intelligence and technical skills only the armed forces on Dublin battlefield are the sole depository. Elliot Nigel Reid discusses the dreadful man-hunting atmosphere that went on in Dublin when the Anglo-Irish war got intensified. Reid (2016, p.68) puts that,

Early in January 1921, Thomas Newell located Igoe and some of his men whilst patrolling for them again with other members appointed by Collins for the task. They followed their adversaries for several blocks, hoping to corner them and finish their assignment, but were instead surprised themselves when their quarry seemingly vanished, only to reappear again as the hunters.

It is apparent from Reid's lines that during the Irish rebellion against the British authority, man-hunting proved to be irrefutable evidence. And regarding expected outcomes, the man-hunting project is generally devoted to special operation forces, whose main objective is to get, capture and find the appropriate wanted person. During the Winter's raid in (1919), Edward Kelliher (2016, p.5) remembered and put that " I was one of many Intelligence officers detailed to trail and observe the movements of this gang ... He and a number of other officers at one point lay in waiting near Arran Quay where it was believed the Igoe Gang would be located". Kelliher words confirm the particularity of the manhunt mission and the special feature of the people selected to entrust it.

Likely in O'Casey's play, rival groups hunt enemies and disloyal people for many reasons. Either, these people were supporters of the Irish Republican Army, or they confessed loyalty to the British authority, the current ruling government. In one case or another, O'Casey's *The Shadow of the Gunman* displays the enterprise of manhunt to be central to the scheme of opposed armed forces. This evidence is eye-catching in the scenes following the landing of the British Army at Davoren's living place. Nearly at the same moment, Minnie Powell was on the run, as she rushed into the house, hastening to collect bombs in her bag when the British armed forces targeted her living place, where "they [soldiers] are all round the house" (II.37). The achievement of the primary step of the manhunt's plan, leads the British armed forces to the path of the arrangement phrase in view of capturing the suspicious-enemy.

The O'Casey scene about Minnie Powell's hunt is marked with planned-military objectives and schemes. Consecutively to the British military search in (1920-1921) and as mentioned in the National Museum of Ireland, it is related that "A cordoned-off area in Kildare

Street, Dublin, during a search of houses by the British military during the War of Independence. They are seen with rifles and bayonets, steel helmets and full war kit, including armoured cars, lorries, and searchlight equipment". In the play, looking for Powell, the suspect, identifying or finding out her true identity, then getting into her living place are at the heart of the British forces scheme in the play. "Halt, halt, halt" the British soldiers frightfully instructed Powell to stop. This short moment was followed by loud shots from the British army who run after her. Minnie Powell is a twenty-three girl whose character is built up by the hardship of life. Like Mr. Maguire, an IRA volunteer, Powell's life has been marked by distressing events. O'Casey describes her as a courageous, revolutionary female character who is, by necessity self-sufficient owing to the early death of her parents. Some scholars including Ryan Evans paints Minnie Powell with very special features.

In an online paper *Dying for the Shadow: The Heroism of Minnie Powell and the Working Class in Sean O'Casey's The Shadow of a Gunman* Evans (2023) puts that "Minnie is brave, loyal and decent, she shows the disgust felt towards those who...betrayed the nationalist dream to mediocrity and the ideals of labor to bourgeois self-interest". The critic's construction of Powell as the IRA combatant fires the imagination of the new generation of Irish nationalists. Powell's connection with the IRA movement is undeniably the underlying motivation that gives sense to her life. She inspires hope as well as Powell is the symbol of Irish nationalism and independence (Ayling;1983). She claims her willingness to die for the Irish cause because it is the civilians who always die for the gunmen as O'Casey notes it discontentedly.

Powell's political engagement, militancy, and activism with the IRA are the causes of her trouble and tracking down by the British Soldiers. Prior to her loyalty to the IRA forces and her early commitment to the state's politics for independence, British authority identified Powell as one of the many supports the Irish revolutionists and nationalists could rely on and who are scattered over Dublin's slums. Powell's closeness with other inhabitants of the Tenement helps

comprehend the depth of her political engagement for Ireland's freedom. As Seumas and Davoren complained about a bag full of bombs in their living place, Minnie Powell bravely decided to take the bag and rushed out with it (II.38). Consecutively to Powell's rushing out, the British army occupied her room looking actively for the IRA activist.

As scenes of military patrol progressed, the British forces in O'Casey's play successfully found the House of Maguire and Powell, the presumed activists. Regarding the complexity of the mission, the group of armed forces were divided into two groups, each having a clear-cut task. When the first group went downstairs "turning the place upside-down" (O'Casey), the other group questioned the upstairs' inhabitants. Seumas and Davoren were submitted to the auxiliary for forceful questioning. Following this unfortunate session of psychological torture, the two groups headed for nearby living places. And to ensure the mission's success, the colonizing forces took up residence in the living place of Dolphie, Maguire, and Powell, the activists. In one room, Dolphie was treated roughly and Mrs. Grigson could hear him moaning (O'Casey), meanwhile, some soldiers discovered "a pin whisky bottle under Dolphie's pillow an' they're drinkin' every drop of it" (II.39). In the other one, the armed forces came across a heavy bag on a table in the kitchen. The bag was brought in by Minnie Powell who was finally captured and arrested.

The episode of the inhabitant tenement's hunt leveled up by Minnie Powell's abrupt capture is a warning signal to the IRA members and the Irish revolutionist. Powell's arrest opens a new path in her hunting process. Being an engaged activist, O'Casey's brave and courageous Powell is caught in her running away. In the state of captivity, Powell's destiny is run by her torturer. Now and then, she has to undergo the outcome of her political commitment against the British authority. In O'Casey's play, the British forces considered Powell as an enemy and someone "... that's going to overthrow the British Empire" (II.39). Regarding the drawbacks of Powell's arrest and her being accused, the degree of her punishment is related to the scope of the role she plays in the IRA's rebellion. In the Anglo-

Irish War of Independence, traitorous, opponents were usually executed and shot down in cold blood by the other party. Likely, Minnie Powell was killed by the British colonist.

III. Arbitrary Execution of Civilians: Minnie Powell's Dead

Arbitrary execution was a quasi-official daily practice during the Anglo-Irish War. *The Shadow of a Gunman* is one of the choicest pieces in the collection of Irish plays that better exposes cases of summary executions during the Irish War of Independence. Dublin or Cork experienced several cases of extra-judicial executions from the British forces as well as from the IRA. In (1921) during the Ellis Quarry killings, four British soldiers were executed by the IRA. Likely, Thomas Ashe, an Irish member was murdered by firing squad in (1916). O'Casey's play helps comprehend that summarily killing was used by armed forces as a coercion tool to terrorize enemy groups intimidating them into submission. In the play, Davoren and his co-tenement dweller underwent psychological torture as the auxiliary menaced "Displaying his revolver in a careless way" (II.39) and shooting them with his gun.

In the times of the Anglo-Irish War, arbitrary executions were committed with impunity by enemy forces. A consequence of this is that in O'Casey's play, impunity furthers an environment inclined to societal destitution as it worked like a vendetta policy. And based on this policy, opposed forces behaved and treated one another unlawfully following their whim. In the chaotic condition of the Irish Land, O'Casey notices that " the country is hopeless an' the people is hopeless " (II.40). And as the war scenes unfold in the play, cases of unlawful execution intensify and get significant, displaying different types of condemnable and barbaric acts. Sometimes, the play shows condemned people tied to a post and shot by a firing squad of soldiers. Then, hanging was another way to execute the accused in O'Casey's play. He or she was hanged from the gallows until the person died. Other times, the fugitive, like Powell, was shot as she tried to escape from the executioner. During the Irish War, it was argued that arbitrary executions spread over the country and were implemented at will. In *The Government's Execution Policy*

During the Irish Civil War 1922-1923, Breen T. Murphy (2010, p.95) writes that "[upon execution policy, people] had a vendetta against [their enemies] and were obsessed with catching, trying and executing [them] regardless of offenses committed". Murphy's thought of lines provides human understanding with detailed explanations of the peremptory feature that the policy of execution was driven during the crisis of Ireland's independence. And O'Casey's Powell was cognizant of the scope of the punishment she deserved if she was caught.

When Minnie Powell noticed that the British armed forces were getting closer and closer to Davoren's room, she decided to leave the place in haste. On her departure from Davoren's room, Minnie held the bag rushing out with the bombs inside. Being a girl, she thought the troop of armed forces would not suspect her of having a connection with politics. In fact, Minnie wanted to make use of her female character and deceive the invader's attention into perceiving her as an apolitical person. Personally, she was fully convinced that the auxiliary and his men could not brutalize a lady. And upon her carrying away the bag of bombs Minnie argues "I take them to my room; maybe they won't search it; [because] they won't harm, she is only a girl" (II.38-41). Minnie's sense of responsibility is rewarding for her community, as the auxiliary and his men may not submit them to some torture. She takes a courageous decision for her housemates.

Minnie's courageous decision to move a suspicious "bag" thinking that her being a female is advantageous to her, is a telling expression of her ignorance of the nature and spread of action of the British forces in war times. In fact, at wartimes, nobody was left aside, and enemies (men and women) are sometimes treated in the same way. Consecutively, Irish women underwent the same mistreatment as their husbands, because their contribution to the effort of war came to the fore during the Irish War of Independence (Walsh, 2020). Likely, Bill Nasson (2007, p.178-79) claims that "Irish women contributed to the war effort themselves, echoing the specific female war service that emerged in all belligerent countries. In Ireland, ... women knitted socks, prepared parcels of 'comforts',

nursed wounded soldiers, and cared for the families of enlisted men". Women were therefore outstanding agents and allies during the war, and like Minnie Powell, whose contribution to the Irish volunteer fighters, is eye-catching, should not be neglected.

As scenes of terror proceed in the play, Davoren's moaning and voices of agony are heard next door, while Minnie Powell has difficulty getting a safe place to hide. Then, a voice more authoritarian thickens the atmosphere that was already burdensome due to the tenement inhabitants' ceaseless cries for assistance. The loud-angry and commanding voice instructs them to hand up and follow them. Following this terrifying climate, the auxiliary and his troop still looked for opponents and Irish volunteer fighters, especially Minnie Powell. And when it located the Irish volunteer's living room the armed forces made "a whole lot of stuff in Minnie's room" and she was already in action shouting "Up the Republic' at the top of her voice" (II.42). Minnie was arrested, severely truncheoned, pummelled before Powell was thrown into the troop's lorry.

Powell's ill-treatment by the armed forces expressively displayed the fate in store for the Irish volunteer fighters and the planned spread of inhuman and ill-usage of female characters during the Irish War of Independence. Irish women volunteer fighters were aware of the pain, and torment they deserved in case they were identified and caught as Irish independent support. They were willingly determined to suffer ill-treatment as men because bombs did not discriminate against them during the war. Bombs of the British invader killed anyone, regardless of age, religion, and gender. In addition, the Irish women volunteers think that "the republic promised us equality without sex distinction, so we were all adjudged soldiers, women and men" (McCarthy, 2007, p. 66). In fact, when the Anglo-Irish scattered over Dublin and its lands women were not spared from the violence. And prior to the destructive impact of the war on women, although they were not on the battlefield, "It appears that women wished to endure the same treatment and danger as men" (Walsh, 2020, p.176). Based on the

overspread drawbacks of raids, the killing of women became a commonplace fact during the Irish War of Independence.

The Irish War for self-determination against the British invaders caused the murder and killing of many leading female figures in Ireland. In (1922) Countess Markievicz died following a murderous bullet from the British forces. She was a leading figure in the IRA independence movement and a founding member of Fianna Eireann. Mrs. Markievicz was the first Irish woman to be elected to the Westminster Parliament and as Minister for Labour in First Dail. She was therefore an influencing member and figurehead of the Irish Member Citizen Army. Countess Markievicz played an important part in the Easter Rising (1921), precisely when Republicans tried to make an end to British rule by establishing the Irish Republic. She was finally caught and then “was sentenced to death, commuted to life imprisonment on the grounds of her sex” (British National Archives). She was imprisoned before being killed. It comes out that Mrs. Markievicz was as active in administrative business as she was on a battlefield. She was an engaged IRA woman fighter.

A year before the Irish female combatant was captured and killed, in (1921), Mary Lindsay was executed along with her chauffeur James Clark by the IRA members. Lindsay acted as a spy on behalf of the British armed forces. She was a leading female leader because Lindsay openly acted according to her political conviction. With her devotion to British imperialism causes and growing concern for British political domination, Lindsay's involvement in the war as an informer-spy for the British authority was limitless. Regarding her status as a British- informer, Lindsay played a vital role in the war outcome in favor of British power. In fact, when she heard of the ambush the IRA forces were setting up, Lindsay immediately informed the crown forces at Ballincolling Military Barracks. And the exploitation of Lindsay's information culminated in the massacre of the IRA ambusher. Therefore, Lindsay took on the entire responsibility for the murder of six IRA volunteers on August 22 (1922). Lindsay was a heroic figure of British colonization and domination in Ireland.

Like Powell in the play, when Lindsay was caught by the IRA forces, she was severely questioned and executed later on. In the same vein, O'Casey's Powell was arrested, captured, and badly shot in a final attempted escape by the British army. O'Casey reveals that "Minnie is shot... [then] A lull follows, punctured by an odd rifle- shot" (II.43-4) and she died. Powell's cruel murder is indicative of war barbarism and its limitless destructive drawbacks toward human beings, especially females. This fact is what appears in the diary of O'Casey as he was the secretary of the Irish Citizen Army and responsible for keeping notes of meetings (Murray, 2000). It is certainly the Irish war atrocity that O'Casey's literature denounces, painting its devastating aspects in *the Shadow of a Gunman*. These terrible events are the ones the playwright experienced personally. Brooks Atkinson (1982, p.104) believes that the strong likeness between the event of the play and that of the Irish War "has the spontaneity of truth". Thus; O'Casey's Davoren and the tenement inhabitants were trapped in this horror as they could not move inside or outside. In fact, when the British armed forces invaded their living place, "Explosions of two bursting bombs are heard on the street outside the house ..." (II.43), then in a panic, each resident looked for a safe shelter. Grigsson found asylum in the Kitchen, some inhabitants went downstairs and others stayed upstairs witnessing helplessly the horrifying spectacle of Powell's ill-treatment, and summary execution.

Conclusion

The literature of O'Casey stands as one of the various manifests that denounce the barbarism of British imperialism war toward the Irish idea of freedom and aspiration to self-government. British imperialism is strongly put to rout by the determination and unconquerable spirit of the IRA members that the tenement inhabitants, Powell and Davoren embodied in the play. The Anglo-Irish War ruins the Irish fabric but strengthens their will sharpening the IRA members' desire to fight and get independent at all costs. O'Casey's picturing the chaos resulting from the independence war staged in a single-poor tenement is a strong message that expresses

each social class's involvement in the issue of freedom and independence. Davoren and his tenement mates have always dreamed of a land that brings joy to its children and not destruction. And many Irish women got engaged in the War of Independence on the basis that only fighting for freedom was worth it. The story of these glorious and leading female figures is outstandingly inspiring in the fight for one's nation. Not only it teaches hope to young Irish ladies Minnie and alike, but also the action of Mrs. Markievicz, and Mary Lindsay roots expectancy for a new dawn in Ireland. O'Casey's evocation of Minnie's political involvement in the play caricatures the degree of human thirst for freedom and optimism for self-conduct. When these women are captured and killed, whatever the reason, their death in the mind of O'Casey reveals war's cruel trait of being merciless. Powell and his tenement inhabitants are voiceless victims of British war bombs. Therefore, O'Casey's painting of war with dexterity (mixing joy and pain) occurs as the expression of possible life after the War. His intellectual handling of war business reveals his attachment to Esperance which becomes true as the Irish Free State was established on December 6, 1922. This step paves the way for an "Irish modern state and nation-building" (Anderson, O'Dowd, 934) and constitutes a significant step forward to Irish independence. Today, *The Shadow of a Gunman* stands as a relevant work because it offers the appropriate aperture for contemporary debate about war and peace from the perspectives of a sustainable peaceful relationship between rulers and ruled.

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